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# THE

# WIDOW MARRIED.

## A SEQUEL TO "THE WIDOW BARNABY."

BY

FRANCES TROLLOPE.

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[illegible] ...rous Illustrations on Steel

LONDON:

WARD AND LOCK, 158, FLEET STREET.

1857.

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# ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

Mrs. Major Allen's Horror at the sight of the Ugly Old Maid ... *Frontispiece.*

Mrs. Major Allen receives Lying-in Visits ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 11

Mrs. O'Donagough objects to the Custom of the Custom-House ... ... ... ... 69

Miss Patty makes herself quite at home at the General's ... ... ... ... ... 118

Mrs. O'Donagough's Magnificent Behaviour to Aunt Compton ... ... ... ... 147

Affecting Interview between Mrs. O'Donagough and her Relations ... ... ... 170

Miss Matilda Perkins takes a last fond Look at her dear Lieutenant ... ... ... 200

Miss Patty interrupted in her *tête-à-tête* with Jack ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 242

Foxcroft's Surprising Declaration ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 289

Interview between Lord Mucklebury and his "Magnifica O'Donnaccia" ... ... 301

Mrs. O'Donagough and Patty create a Sensation at Court ... ... ... ... ... 340

# THE WIDOW MARRIED.

## CHAPTER I.

All persons tolerably well read in biography are aware that the amiable Mrs. Barnaby, *ci-devant*, Miss Martha Compton, of Silverton, after having lost her second husband, the Reverend Mr. O'Donagough, from the effects of an unfortunate accident, which occurred to him near Sydney, in New South Wales, bestowed her still extremely fair hand on her former friend and favourite, Major Allen. But the events which followed these third espousals, though unquestionably of as much general interest as any which preceded them, have never yet been given to the public with that careful attention to the truth of history which they deserve; and it is to remedy this obvious defect in English literature, that the present narrative has been composed.

The existence of Mrs. Barnaby (this name is once more used as the one by which our heroine has hitherto been best known), the existence of Mrs. Barnaby, up to the hour in which she pledged her vows to Major Allen, before the altar of the principal church in Sydney, had, on the whole, been a very happy one. She had, in fact, very keenly enjoyed many things, which persons less fortunately constituted might have considered as misfortunes; and to the amiable and well-disposed reader a continuation of the history of such a mind can hardly fail of being useful as an encouragement and example.

Mrs. O'Donagough, on the day she married Major Allen, was exactly thirty-eight years of age, at least she only wanted two days of it; and it is possible that her wish to enhance the festivity of every scene in which she was engaged, might have led her to name her birthday as that on which her third wedding should take place, had it not been that a sort of dislike which she had taken, while still Martha Compton, of Silverton, to the unnecessary dragging forth the date of the day and hour at which people were born, still continued. She, therefore, said

nothing at all about her birthday, but prepared for the solemn ceremony with as much tender emotion, and as delicate a bloom, as when she first pledged her virgin troth to Mr. Barnaby.

Born under a happy star, a pleasure yet awaited Mrs. Major Allen, the want of which she had often lamented, and of which her hopes had long since withered and faded, till at length they assumed the worn-out aspect of despair. But in due time, after her third marriage, Mrs. Allen communicated to the Major the delightful intelligence that he was likely to become a father.

Major Allen behaved exceedingly well on the occasion; professing his entire satisfaction at the news, and adding with newly-awakened paternal forethought, "If that is the case, Mrs. Allen, we must mind our hits as to money matters, and take care that our little evening card-parties answer."

To this Mrs. Major Allen had not the slightest objection; but how powerful is maternal feeling in a woman's heart! Though she failed not to render her little Sydney *soirées* as attractive as ever, though she walked about the room, and behind the card-players as usual, never forgetting a single instruction given to her by her ingenious husband—notwithstanding she did all this, her heart was almost wholly in her work-basket!

It was really beautiful to watch the development of a mother's feelings in a heart which had never yet been awakened to them! For instance, Mrs. Major Allen had never shown herself, in any country, particularly fond of poor people; but now she never saw a woman in her own interesting situation, without feeling her heart, or, at any rate, her attention drawn towards her; and many a question did she ask, and many a copper coin did she bestow, in consequence of this most amiable species of solicitude.

During the first months of her residence at Sydney, she had not, perhaps, chosen her intimates among the most domestic ladies; but now the case was entirely altered. There was an excellent woman, a Mrs. Sheepshanks, the wife of an attorney, enjoying great business in the town, who had more little children than any other lady in it, and with her, Mrs. Major Allen now sought to form an intimacy of the most familiar kind. She delighted in nothing so much as stepping in to call upon her as soon as breakfast was over, and entering with her, even while her nursery avocations rendered everything like regular conversation impossible, into a sort of zigzag intercourse, between saying and doing, that to any one less delightfully alive to the innocent attractions of little children, must have appeared exceedingly tiresome.

Mrs. Sheepshanks, poor woman! like all the other ladies in the settlement, found it very difficult, not to say impossible, to

keep any decent servant in her family; the few young women who deserved the epithet, getting married themselves with such certain rapidity, as to give every reason to suppose that Mr. Hood's interesting anecdote of an offer of marriage being made through a speaking-trumpet, to a vessel approaching the coast with young ladies aboard, must have been founded strictly on fact.

At the time Mrs. Sheepshanks and her little family took such hold on the affections of Mrs. Major Allen, the only attendant the attorney's lady had to assist her in the labours of the nursery, was a girl of seventeen, whose domestic education not having been particularly attended to, left her with rather less knowledge of her duties in such a situation, than might have been wished.

The confusion, therefore, which sometimes ensued in this department of the household, was considerable; but Mrs. Major Allen bore it all; nay, she rejoiced at the excellent opportunities this afforded of obtaining information concerning many infantine facts, of which she had hitherto lived in total ignorance.

Mrs. Sheepshanks, who, though sometimes a little fretful, was in the main a good-natured woman, always received these visits very kindly; and, indeed, her respect for Mrs. Allen was so great, that she considered them as an honour. For Mrs. Allen had, with friendly confidence, mentioned to her how near she had been to marrying a lord, of which, indeed, her beautiful shell necklace gave the most convincing proof; and she also explained to her the very foolish bit of fun formerly recorded about the old clothes, by which she offended her wealthy aunt, and so lost the chance, or rather the certainty, of becoming her heiress. These, and many other anecdotes of her former life, she had recorded in a manner which left no doubt on the mind of Mrs. Sheepshanks respecting the distinguished rank of the society in which she had mingled in the mother country.

"Dear me, Mrs. Major Allen! only to think of your doing all that with your own hands!" exclaimed this kind-hearted mother of many colonists; "I am sure if it was not for the interest which I know you take in all these little matters just at present, I should be actually fit to die, to see you do such things!"

"Never you mind, Mrs. Sheepshanks," returned the major's lady, "I can't tell you how it all interests me! Pretty little darling! it shall do everything it likes, that it shall. Laugh a little bit then—that's it—laugh again, baby—laugh, laugh, laugh, kiss, kiss, kiss, tickle, tickle, tickle. Bless its sweet heart! I am sure it knows me!" And again Mrs. Major Allen applied the pap-boat to the last born Sheepshanks's

mouth, though the over-fed and intelligent infant immediately returned the superfluity without ceremony.

"How do you think I hold a baby, my dear?" demanded the anxious aspirant to maternal dignity.

"Oh, very well!—very well indeed, considering—only you must mind about the pins. Little Van Diemen is pursing up his mouth now, very much as if he were going to have a cry—and he mostly cries when he gets a pin into him," observed Mrs. Sheepshanks.

Little Van Diemen here gave the most unimpeachable testimony in favour of his mamma's sagacity, for they *had* a cry, and such a long and lusty one, as might have daunted any novice of less firm spirit than Mrs. Major Allen. She, however, hugged the little screamer tightly to her bosom, and though it did not seem at all to comfort him, held him there very close indeed for many minutes, swaying her person backwards and forwards incessantly; while one widely-extended hand pressed firmly upon the upper joint of the vertebræ, and the other upon the lower part of the infant's person, kept it in a position as likely as any thing, short of suffocation, to still the sound.

"It is no good, my dear Mrs. Allen," said the mother. "He'll go on that way till he's undressed again, I'll bet anything—just stop till I have finished combing these two, and I'll look him over myself."

"Oh, *do* let me undress him from top to toe," cried Mrs. Allen, eagerly, "I have never done that my own self yet, and I cannot tell you how I long for it—will you let me try, Mrs. Sheepshanks?"

"Yes, sure, if you like it—stand still, Eliza, can't you!—I am only afraid you'll find it a great plague, and him screaming so."

"Why, I should like it better if he didn't, to be sure, because it frightens me, and in my situation, that is not exactly the thing. However, it is quite needful I should get my hand in; not but what I shall make the major give the highest of wages; and that, you know, if anything can, will get me a nurse; so that I shan't have more to do than what my maternal feeling naturally leads to. But, nevertheless, it is quite right and proper that I should know all about it myself—there's a darling now;" continued the fond mother-expectant, addressing the still screaming baby. "There's a love—just let me untie these strings, only these strings, my beautiful darling! There, there, there—now *donty wonty!*" These last words being uttered in the coaxing idiom of her native country, attracted the attention of the nursery-maid of all work, who at that moment entered the room. This girl having some years before accompanied her mother in her voyage from London, under circum-

stances that, by skilful management, had rendered the excursion, young as she was, equally necessary for both, was apt to boast of her metropolitan education, and particularly prided herself on her "parts of speech."

"Vell now, vat does *donty vonty* mean, I should like to know? You'd better give over the child to me, ma'am—I knows his vays, and he knows my vords."

The style in which this dainty damsel, who was frightfully marked by the smallpox, approached, was not conciliatory, for her red arms were stuck akimbo, and her nose, always of the *retroussé* order, turned up in very evident contempt.

"Mind your manners, Phebe!" cried her mistress, but Phebe strode on towards the low rocking-chair on which Mrs. Major Allen was seated, and placing herself before her as close as it was possible to stand, while a pair of squinting eyes, that were intended to look boldly at her, seemed wandering, heaven knows where, repeated in no very silvery tones—"You'd better give over the child to me."

Upon every former occasion when Mrs. Major Allen had mixed herself up with the nursery arrangements of her friend, the scene of action, however active and interesting the business going on, had always been the parlour. But this happened to be washing-day, and the absence of Phebe being absolutely certain till dinner-time, Mrs. Sheepshanks gave herself up altogether, as she said, to supply her place, and nothing less than the pertinacity of Mrs. Allen could have obtained an entrance into the house. Once pursued, however, into that receptacle of all litter, her nursery, the poor lady was perhaps not sorry to have some one as willing as Mrs. Allen to nurse a baby—for she had made up her mind that day to have a general review of all her children's heads; and accordingly the major's lady was put in possession of the nursing-chair, and permitted, as we have seen, to revel in the delight of handling a baby to her heart's content.

So earnestly was she engaged in unravelling the manifold mysteries of baby buttons and strings, that, notwithstanding Phebe's abrupt address, Mrs. Allen did not raise her eyes towards the girl, till she stood close before her face; and when at last she did so, she pushed the chair violently back, very nearly let little Van Diemen fall out of her arms, and uttered, "Oh! good gracious me!" in a voice that almost amounted to a scream.

"Lord have mercy! what's the matter, Mrs. Allen?" cried Mrs. Sheepshanks, pushing aside the head upon which she was operating, "Van isn't taken with a fit, is he?"

By this time the agitated Mrs. Major Allen had risen from the nursing-chair, and having hastily laid the baby in the cradle

beside it, she approached her friend with strong symptoms of agitation.

"For Heaven's sake come into the parlour with me for one moment, my dear Mrs. Sheepshanks!" she said. "I will not detain you more than a moment. I am going home directly, but indeed, indeed, I must speak to you first."

"Dear me! I don't know what to do, I'm sure, with the butter and beer, and all lying about in this way. Wouldn't it do Mrs. Allen if I was to come in and hear what you want to say after dinner?"

"Good Heaven, no! you have no idea of the state of mind I am in! Indeed, you must let me speak to you directly."

Thus urged, poor Mrs. Sheepshanks, though looking exceedingly distressed, resigned her sponge and her combs, placed everything upon the chimney-piece, as much out of reach as she could—wiped her hands upon her linen apron, before she took it off, and then followed her terrified-looking guest to the parlour.

"Oh, my dear friend! tell me your opinion honestly and truly—I conjure you not to deceive me! You have had great experience—you *must* be able to form a judgment. Do you think there is any danger of my child's being like that dreadful girl?"

"What girl, ma'am? What is it you mean, Mrs. Allen?" said Mrs. Sheepshanks, looking a little cross, and as if she did not as yet perceive any good and sufficient reason for her having been forced to abandon her important avocations in the nursery.

"What girl?—oh!" with a violent shudder, "that frightful, frightful girl that you call Phebe. For Heaven's sake, Mrs. Sheepshanks, don't be out of temper. Don't be angry with me, but consider my situation! Though I have been a married woman, as you know, for some years, this is the first time ——. In short, you know what my condition is, and now I implore you to tell me if you think there is any danger, nervous and delicate as I am, that my looking up so very suddenly close under that horrid girl's face, is likely to mark the child."

"What, with the smallpox, Mrs. Allen?" said Mrs. Sheepshanks, with great simplicity.

"I don't know. Mercy on me! how should I know? Smallpox, squinting, that dreadful nose too! Oh, Mrs. Sheepshanks, Mrs. Sheepshanks! all the happiness, all the delight I have promised myself, will be lost and destroyed for ever, if my child is born in any way like that horrid girl!"

Here Mrs. Major Allen burst into a very passionate flood of tears, and wrung her hands so piteously, as she fixed her streaming eyes upon her neighbour's face, that the good lady,

though thinking her cause of grief rather visionary, could not refuse her sympathy, and answered very kindly, "No, indeed, Mrs. Allen, I don't think you have got the least bit of reason to fear any such thing. It is much more likely, depend upon it, that your dear babe should resemble its good-looking papa, or your own self, Mrs. Allen, who have got such good, striking features, than a girl that you never happened to look at but once."

"That's it, Mrs. Sheepshanks—that's just the most shocking and provoking part of it. If I did not know that the Major had always been considered as exceedingly handsome, and myself too—I won't deny it, for why should I?—I was always counted something out of the common way, in that respect, and if I did not know all this as well as I do, I should not mind the thing half so much."

"But why *should* your child be like Phebe Perkins, Mrs. Allen? The girl is no beauty, to be sure, I'm not going to say she is; but yet I can't understand why her ugliness should put you into such a way as this," replied Mrs. Sheepshanks, with some little severity of emphasis.

"For mercy's sake don't be angry with me my dear, dear friend. For mercy's sake don't reproach me! Something very unfortunate will happen, I'm quite sure, if you do. You can't think, I am certain you can't, how I feel. 'Twas the suddenness, Mrs. Sheepshanks, the shocking suddenness, with which I looked up, that made the danger, as I take it. Tell me, for pity's sake, without being hasty with me, did any such thing ever happen to you?"

"What thing, Mrs. Allen? The seeing Phebe?"

"No, no, that I suppose you got accustomed to a little at a time, as I may say, and by degrees. So unlike poor unlucky me! But what I mean is, if any of your children were ever marked in any way?"

"Dear me, no, Mrs. Allen," replied this fond mother of many children, with a very natural air of displeasure, "can't you see that they are not?"

"Oh yes, to be sure—not in sight, not in sight, certainly," sobbed out the agitated lady.

"Nor out of sight either, I assure you, ma'am."

"Oh my dear, what a happy, happy, woman you are! and so many of them like you too!" rejoined Mrs. Allen, in so very flattering and conciliatory a tone, that her friend's little feeling of displeasure vanished at once, and cordially seizing her hand, she said,

"Don't you worry yourself about any such nonsense, my dear Mrs. Allen. You go home, and look in the glass, and there it is that you'll see what your dear baby will be most like."

There was something in this assurance so calculated to touch the heart of Mrs. Major Allen, that she could not resist it. With an emotion over which she really seemed to have no control, she threw her arms round the neck of the kind prophetess, and bestowed upon her a very fervent kiss.

"Heaven grant that your words may come true, my dear, dear Mrs. Sheepshanks!" she exclaimed, with her eyes once more flashing through her tears. "I do declare, that if I could have a girl exactly like what I was when Captain Tate first came to Silverton, I should be the very happiest woman in the world!"

"Well then, I'm sure I hope you will. But I suppose you'd like it to be a little like the Major too?" said Mrs. Sheepshanks, playfully.

"Oh! about that I don't know, my dear. If you could know what I was at the time I talk about, I don't think you'd advise any alteration—unless it was to be a boy, indeed."

"And then I suppose you would be better pleased still. Most ladies like to have a boy first."

"But I don't though," replied Mrs. Major Allen, rather sharply. "That's all very well for people who are never celebrated for having anything particular about them. But where there *is* beauty, and great family beauty particularly, it is certainly most desirable to have a girl, because it's likely to answer best."

"Well then," returned Mrs. Sheepshanks, rising hastily, for she heard sounds alarmingly indicative of a general nursery riot, —"well then, dear Mrs. Allen, go home, sit down before your looking-glass, and take my word for it, there is a deal better chance that your child will be like what you see there, than to poor pock-fretten Phebe. Good bye, good bye."

Mrs. Major Allen delayed not a moment longer, but took leave as briskly as Mrs. Sheepshanks herself could desire. There was certainly something like superstitious respect in the reverence with which Mrs. Major Allen listened to every word *à propos* of maternity which fell from the lips of this lady. Looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, and terribly afraid that some acquaintance might stop her ere she reached her home, Mrs. Allen hurried forward, with as rapid a step as she considered prudent under existing circumstances, and the moment her door was opened to her, hastened up stairs without pausing to make any of the little domestic inquiries which usually followed her return.

For a moment she sat down to recover breath, and then slowly and carefully, and without too much exertion, permitted herself to draw the table, which served her for a toilet, into what she considered to be the most advantageous light. Not the strongest, perhaps, but that which by former experiments

she knew would show the most favourably to her own eyes, that large portion of her charms still left unscathed by time.

Having hazarded this active, but unnecessary exercise, Mrs. Allen placed herself in a soft and ample chair, and sat for some minutes of complete and soothing repose, with her mirror at the right angle, and her own still bright eyes very fondly fixed upon it. The motive for the occupation in which she was employed, perhaps gave an additional charm to her expression, and she thought she was almost as handsome as ever.

There was, however, none of that dangerous confidence of self-conceit in Mrs. Allen, which leads some people to fancy that they are quite handsome enough, and need no improvement. On the contrary, in her very best days she had never encouraged the belief that her beauty, remarkable as it was, required no assistance from human ingenuity and skill. She knew the contrary, and even now, alone as she was, and under the influence only of motives the most pure and sublime that can elevate the heart (or the art) of woman, she shook off the feeling of fatigue which her exertions at Mrs. Sheepshanks's had occasioned, and ceased not to add touch to touch, and divide, and subdivide ringlet from ringlet, till, as she gazed on the finished picture, she felt that there was no more to be done!

A poet has said that

**Industry to beauty adds new grace.**

And though it is probable that this expression originally alluded to labours of another kind, it is impossible not to perceive that it may be beautifully applied to the charming woman whose image is now before our mind's eye.

Nothing, surely, can be imagined more touching than the occupation and appearance of Mrs. Allen at this time; and a painter would do well to seize and embody a moment of feeling so calculated to find sympathy in every female heart. We all know that pretty women love to adorn themselves for conquest, and we smile, though with no very harsh satire, at the vanity that flutters the while around their fair bosoms.

But how different was the spectacle offered by Mrs. Major Allen, as she sat in her lone chamber in Van Diemen's Land! Her whole soul occupied, it is true, with the idea of her own beauty; but in the hope, not of slaying whole hecatombs of lovers with that beauty, as perhaps she might have dreamed of in the giddy days of yore, but of transmitting it to a dear pledge of wedded love, who should carry it down through unnumbered generations of posterity!

Callous must be the heart, and lifeless the imagination, that does not kindle at this image!

## CHAPTER II.

At length the happy hour arrived, and Mrs. Major Allen became a mother. Only those who have waited as long as this lady had done for the honoured blessing can be capable of appreciating her feelings on the occasion.

It is not, nevertheless, recorded of her by those who knew her best, that any very remarkable development of the organ of philo-progenitiveness was perceptible in her formation. The triumphant gladness of her heart arose from a complex variety of intellectual impressions with which this sort of mere animal organisation had, in truth, very little to do. It was the consciousness that, while almost all other married ladies had children, she had none, which had galled her. It was the idea that her well-secured money would "have to go to somebody who did not belong to her" that rankled at her heart; and it was a vague suspicion that her gay husband occasionally alluded to her childless condition, and quizzed her ignorance of all nursery concerns in his conversation with other, and perhaps younger, ladies, which irritated her spirit. It was, therefore, the cure for all these gnawing griefs that she blessed and hailed with rapture, when a bouncing, stout-screaming little girl was put into her arms.

Most ladies love a little fuss upon such occasions, and it is not very wonderful if Mrs. Major Allen coveted a good deal. Though feeling as little like an invalid as any lady ever did under such circumstances, she would not abate an hour of the regular stipulated month's confinement, which she had heard repeatedly spoken of as the proper period of retreat for ladies of delicate health. Not, indeed, that she desired to live alone till the baby-moon's evolution was complete—on the contrary, not only her friend and constant preceptress, Mrs. Sheepshanks, but all the other genteel ladies of Sydney, were given to understand that they might come to look at Mrs. Major Allen and her beautiful baby every morning if they liked it; and as very sufficient caudle, and vast quantities of plum-cake were daily distributed, they all did like it very much, and came accordingly.

Any lady of any land might, indeed, have found much in Mrs. Allen's Sydney dressing-room, at this time, to repay the trouble of a visit, provided, that is to say, it was within tolerably easy reach of them. It might not, perhaps, have been worth while to sail round half the world in order to enter it; yet there was a vast deal there both to see and to admire.

Mrs Major Allen receives lying-in visits

Reading people already know that Mrs. Major Allen was remarkable for her taste in dress; and that wherever display was called for, her peculiar genius appeared to the greatest advantage. The retirement of a sick chamber might, by many, be considered as likely to check, at least for a time, this propensity for striking decoration; but such was not the case with Mrs. Allen; and, though in a different style, her toilet was as distinguished during her first month of maternity as at any period of her existence. From the hour she quitted her bed, which, feeling herself exceedingly strong and well, she insisted upon doing with as little loss of time as possible, her costume was perfect. This part of the business had been long meditated upon, and the preparation for it having commenced at a very early stage of her hopes, was persevered in with unwearied industry to the end. Her long-loved satin-stitch was, upon this occasion as heretofore, of the most essential use to her; indeed, without it, she never could have reached that perfection of attire for herself, her room, and her child which became the admiration of Sydney and all its neighbouring villas.

Where a great effect is produced by very delicate touches, it is not altogether easy either to follow the process, or do justice to the result; but what is both original and beautiful should never be passed over in silence, from the doubting timidity of those whose duty it is to describe it.

The curtains of Mrs. Major Allen's apartment were, upon this occasion, of full rose-coloured calico, covered with a species of muslin so open in its texture as to be exported for mosquito-nets. Upon the draperies of these she had, some weeks before her confinement, affixed some white scallops of her own invention, each one having a little tassel of rose-coloured calico, cut into slips, attached to it. Her sofa, removed from the parlour for the occasion, was clothed in the same style, and elicited an exclamation of wonder and delight from every one who approached it. Three small cushions, carelessly balanced on the back and arms of this extensive couch, were also of the same gay and happy hue, and not a corner of them but showed in patterns of labyrinthine grace and intricacy the powers of a skilful needle.

Mrs. Major Allen herself was habited in a robe of white, which, though not of a particularly fine texture, was really exquisitely elegant, as all the Sydney ladies agreed, from the profusion of elaborate satin-stitch bestowed upon its cuffs and collar.

"I always said so," observed Mrs. Major Allen to her nurse, the first time she put on one of the two beautiful robes thus prepared, "I always said that there was nothing in the whole world like satin-stitch for giving an elegant finish; and I will tell you

what, nurse, you may depend upon it, that amongst all the things that a woman does, there is nothing, positively nothing, that answers so well as satin-stitch."

It is no use to talk of THE cap of Mrs. Major Allen upon this occasion, for she not only wore a succession of caps, all more or less indebted to the same favourite decoration for their superiority to all other caps—but moreover, with a refinement of taste and ingenuity of arrangement only to be equalled, perhaps, by the manner in which progressive sunshine is made to steal upon the pictures of the diorama, almost every day was made to chronicle her approach to convalescence by some delicate strengthening, if I may so say, of her beauty. The rouge, which long habit had made so habitually a part of her daily *puttings on*, that within twenty-four hours of Miss Allen's birth, the maternal cheek had received

——— a little red,

was, nevertheless, used with such forbearing moderation, that the lady looked, as she ought to do, considerably paler than usual; and it was only by increasing, day by day, the skilfully modulated bloom, that at the happy termination of "her month" Mrs. Major Allen appeared as glowing a representation of youth, beauty, and health as before. The copious quantity of ringlets, too, which, excepting that they happened to be of a somewhat softer texture, differed little from those which had fanned the dusty air of the Silverton ball-room, when she danced with Captain Tate, appeared in like manner by degrees, and, to use Voltaire's charming words, returned to enchant the world

——— Pas à pas,
Comme un jour doux, dans les yeux délicants.

When first she sat up in bed, one shining black corkscrew, peeping forth from each side beneath the embroidered nightcap, was all that she deemed congruous to her condition. On the morrow a second came, and then a third, till at length the whole pendent mass, black as night, yet lustrous in its rich and oily glossiness, once more spread its lurid glories on each side her radiant face.

As to the dress and general appearance of the baby, it varied according to the hours of the day. Its admirable mother, who piqued herself on being an excellent manager, was a great economist in all that appertained to the laundry department, and before it was many hours old she discovered that care must be taken as to its dear little expenses in that line, as well as in its papa's and her own. So the darling poppet was not always prepared for company; but when it was, the fulness of the mother's heart might easily be read in

the elaborate decoration of its attire. In a word, New South Wales had never before seen such a mother and child; and nothing could exceed the admiration they inspired, or the high consideration in which the Allen family, one and all, were held.

Meanwhile, the Major kept his word, and did take care that all the little parties in which he was engaged, either at home or abroad, should *answer*. Nevertheless, his parental prudence kept pace with his success, and his lady's tightly-settled, and regularly-remitted income, continued to supply all their expenses; so that the Major's steady winnings went on accumulating in a manner that spoke strongly of the fundamental improvement which had taken place in his character and morals since the period when the reader and Mrs. Barnaby were first introduced to him at Clifton.

These winnings, indeed, particularly if stated night after night, or day by day, would, to European ears, appear mere bagatelles, hardly worth recording in a professional gamester's account; but to an inhabitant of Sydney, the yearly aggregate, if roundly named, which, however, never happened to occur, would have been considered as enormous. In this case, as in every other, unremitting perseverance does wonders.

Nulla dies sine linea

is a receipt to fill volumes; and on the same principles, a purse of no small dimensions may be filled, by one who, playing with *assured* success, never suffers any hour in the day and night to be passed in idleness, when it is possible to put a pack of cards in action.

Such was the system of Major Allen; and, though on a small scale, Sydney was no bad field of action for him. Assuredly there was no Crockford's, where, within the space of half a night, a man, without quitting his chair, may be sure of finding an opportunity, if he seek it, of beggaring himself or his neighbour. But there were little quiet corners where, by day or night, small hazards might be played for among the idlers, of which the more industrious part of the population know little or nothing; and a taste for that tempting seesaw, the gaming-table, generated, perhaps, in the brilliant *salons* of Paris, or the club-houses of London, may find wherewithal to keep itself alive, even in the deep retreats of New South Wales.

Major Allen was, therefore, by no means an idle man, neither could he fairly be called an intemperate one. The glass of rum-and-milk that greeted the morn, and the tumbler or two of whisky-toddy that hailed the genial hours of night, cannot be justly quoted in contradiction to this; for nobody ever saw Major Allen drunk. Moreover, his habits, in all things

appertaining to expenditure, were exceedingly careful; he by no means denied himself the constant comfort of dinner, or the occasional gratification of a little display; he and his lady were decidedly classed among the ve people in Sydney. In temper, and general domestic dem as favourable a report may be made of him as most ger under similar circumstances would be likely to deserve the whole, it is to be hoped that the character of this ind who, from his near connection with my heroine, must m important figure in the drama of her future life, may be dered in all respects as improved rather than the contrar the reader parted from him.

But, notwithstanding all these excellent domestic qu Major Allen was not what could be called a confidenti band. Indeed, there were some circumstances connecte his first appearance in the colony, which his wife wa fully able to understand. It was evident that he ha powerful friends among the persons in authority, and the ence and very strict observance he paid them, proved hi of a most grateful temper; but he never entered with his ing lady into any explanation of the origin of this clo nection between them. Neither did he appear to c necessary that she should be troubled with any sta respecting the little sums he was accumulating; nay, his of a well-regulated family economy might have led prefer taking his lady's income under his own immedia separate control; but here, after a somewhat spirited t occasion of the two first quarterly payments, he gave i Allen not being a woman to give way easily, where s herself to be right. So thenceforward he contented hims knowing that all household expenses, of every kind wh including of course his own dress and little personal a ments, were defrayed regularly, and in the most creditabl ner, that is to say, without credit, by this fund.

Now and then, indeed, thinking the little occasional ance which her quick faculties enabled her to afford wh his favourite amusement went on in her presence, ga some right to inquire, she ventured to question him res his winnings. But the following short specimen of su logues will show that he well knew how to answer them.

"For heaven's sake, Major! what *do* you do with a winnings?" she said to him one day, when she would have liked to have got hold of a portion of them to assist purchase of a little finery. "I see you pocket lots of cas after night, and when am I to be the better for it?"

"Don't put yourself in a flurry, my love; I oft money, of course; though God knows, and you know, t

love, that I always take every possible precaution to avoid it; but, nevertheless, it will happen."

"You have not got the face to tell me, that you do not make money by playing?" said Mrs. Major Allen, with some appearance of excitement.

"No, my love! I know my duty both to myself and you too well, to continue playing if such were the case. But it is an amusement that I like, and I take the most scrupulous care that it shall never become any annoyance to you, my dear angel! which you know it must do, did I not take care, when I win, to lay by the amount to be in readiness for the time when I may lose."

Mrs. Major Allen snuffed the air with a slight appearance of agitation, but only said, "I hope you DO lay it by, Major Allen."

This occurred some months before the birth of the little Martha; and it was when she was exactly three months old, that a snug small evening party at home, attended with a run of very obvious good fortune, led to a renewal of the subject.

"A pretty sum you must have pouched last night, Major," said his lady, as she poured out his tea on the following morning, while their infant heiress lay sweetly slumbering in a cradle at her side.

"Yes, my love, pretty well."

"Then I do trust our poor child will be the better for it," said Mrs. Major Allen, putting down the teapot, and placing her right hand on the top of the cradle, while with the other she fondly dallied with the little coverlid, as if it wanted more tucking in than she had given it a dozen times over already. "I do hope, Major Allen, that for the first time in your life you will do something to assist in the maintenance of your family."

"My family," replied the Major, cherupping very affectionately towards the cradle, "have not been very long in want of maintenance."

"Why, we have been married," replied Mrs. Allen, "above a year, sir; and except just furnishing the place, and giving me that trumpery necklace, which is no more to be compared to my shells than light to darkness, you have never spent, to my knowledge, a single farthing of your own, from that hour to this. If it had not been for my own fortune, your family would have been pretty much in want of a maintenance."

"My dearest creature! can you imagine that a man of my knowledge of the world, and general *savoir vivre*, would ever have been guilty of that most unpardonable of all human actions, the marrying a woman without fortune? No, my beautiful Mrs. Major Allen, I adore you far too vehemently, ever to have been guilty of such treacherous, unmanly baseness,

as to have seduced you into marriage with—with—in short, my love, with myself, had I not known that, though not so rich as I once thought you, there was no danger of your actually starving in consequence of your affection for me."

"And you probably thought there might be no danger of your own starving either, dear Major?" replied the lady, laughing a sort of experimental laugh, as not quite certain how the hit might be taken. However, her excellent husband was in extremely good humour, and only laughed a little in return, buttering his toast the while as pleasantly as possible.

This, of course, acted as an encouragement upon the lady, and she again hinted that she should like a little money.

"Upon my word I shall be delighted to oblige you, my dearest Mrs. Allen," he replied, with every appearance of gravity; "but the birth of this darling babe furnishes the very strongest motive a man is capable of feeling, for prudence and economy. I cannot give you money, my dear love! It is the greatest possible grief for me to be obliged to say so, but I should never forgive myself, never! Nor ever, I truly believe, should I sleep in peace again, did I for a moment yield to any temptation that might affect the future fortune of our dear little daughter!"

Here again the Major cherupped at the cradle, and Mrs. Allen, heaving a deep sigh, only muttered in reply, "Then it is quite impossible I should buy any feathers for her bonnet!"

The tone of this very happy New South Welsh couple to each other was, in more respects than one, rather singular. There was occasionally a vast deal of fondness displayed on both sides, yet a sharp observer might sometimes have fancied that there was some latent feeling of suspicion and reserve at their hearts. If this, however, was really the case, they conducted themselves on the whole with great discretion, and might not unaptly have been quoted as a proof that all feelings, with proper schooling, may ever be made subservient to will. This, indeed, must always be the case where motive is strong; and motive was strong enough both in the Major and his lady to produce a line of conduct in each, running so parallel to each other that there was little or no danger of their ever producing a concussion by crossing. Thus, Major Allen never, even in his most playful moments, nor when the whisky-toddy had been the most seductive, hazarded the slightest allusion either to his friend Maintry, or to his excellent servant William, or to the cause or manner of his voyage out, or to the beautiful Isabella d'Almafonte, or even to the Duke of Wellington. While, on the other hand, Mrs. Major Allen appeared totally to have forgotten Silverton Park, and her beautiful set of grays; never gave the slightest indication of remembering such a place as Clifton, such an Abigail as Betty Jacks, such wretches as the

tradesmen of Cheltenham, or such an extraordinary dull place as the Fleet Prison.

There can be no doubt in the world that this was the best plan they could follow; for without it there would have been so remarkable a discrepancy between their confidential reminiscences, and the dignified strain of their ordinary bearing, as must have made their lives appear, even to each other, like one long-drawn-out conspiracy. Whereas, under the existing system, everything went on so smoothly, that it might almost be doubted whether they had not really and truly undergone some Lethean process which had cleared off effectually and for ever all the heavier shadows that hung upon the background of their past existence. In a word, "bygones are Bygones" would have been the most expressive and appropriate motto that they could possibly have adopted.

Mrs. Major Allen was certainly in many respects a very clever woman. Having acutely enough found out what the Major's tactics were and were likely to be, respecting the past, she not only adopted the same with very excellent feminine tact, but taking the fullest advantage of the general amnesty thus granted by memory to all former faults and follies, she gazed at her black-eyed little daughter with renewed hope, and renewed ambition, and felt as fresh in spirit, and as ready to set off again in pursuit of new plots, and new projects, as if she had never met with a disappointment in her life.

But if she wisely cast a veil over what it was disagreeable to remember, the same wisdom led her, as much as it was possible to do so, to keep for ever before her husband's eyes, her own, and those of everybody who approached her, the recollection of all that was creditable in which she could claim a share. Those who know the character of the man can feel no doubt that here, too, the happy sympathy of disposition existing between the married pair would have manifested itself, if the thing had been possible; but herein it would seem that the lady had the advantage of the gentleman. For while she discoursed pretty considerably at large concerning her aunt Compton, of Compton Basset, her dearly beloved niece, Mrs. General Hubert, and above all, of her great friend, and great connection, Lady Elizabeth Norris, the Major, though now and then in general Sydney society echoing the affectionate family allusions of his wife, was never heard to obtrude the mention of his own relations upon anybody.

It was impossible for a woman so acute as Mrs. Major Allen, not to perceive that these frequent references to the old country, increased their consideration in the new one, and this indeed so evidently, that at length it struck her as being well worth while to make an effort towards renewing some intercourse

with those, the far-off sound of whose names was so advantageous.

One afternoon that the Major, who not unfrequently passed his *soirées* from home, had declared his intention of remaining during the entire evening in his own mansion, where he hoped a friend would call and perhaps play a quiet game or two at piquet with him, he happened to say, after giving his lady instructions about making the toddy, and one or two other little particulars, "I like to think, dearest, that whatever I DO win will be sure, sooner or later, to help out the fortune of our darling baby."

Nothing was so sure to put Mrs. Major Allen in good humour, as an observation of this kind from her husband; for the charming buoyancy of her spirits was such that she already—though her young daughter was little more than a twelvemonth old—had determined in her own mind, that the third Martha should do better in life than either of her beautiful predecessors had done. With a degree of contentment to which no words can do justice, she perceived in the features, hair, and complexion of her child, that she had not gazed upon her own image in vain; and blessing the prescient tenderness which had dictated her doing so, she prophesied, as she contemplated the black eyes and dark hair of the darling, that in HER the race of Compton should rise higher than all aunt Betsy's economy had ever yet contrived to place it. Mindful, however, of the many proofs which had met her in the course of her career, that money *was* an important auxiliary in all affairs of love, she became, perhaps, almost immoderately anxious as to everything that concerned the little Martha's pecuniary interests. It is possible that the Major was in some degree aware of this; for it is certain that whenever particularly desirous of insuring the concurrence or aid of his lady, in any of his little schemes, he now invariably hinted that it was probable their result, if well managed, would be favourable to the future prospects of their daughter.

On the occasion above alluded to, his reference to this produced the happiest effect. Mrs. Allen smiled with the greatest sweetness, and even playfully pinched his cheek as she replied, "Never fear me, dear! Hoard away, Major, and when you have got enough to take us back, why back we will go, won't we?"

The Major returned the pinch, nodded his head, but said nothing.

"I suppose you are afraid to promise, Major, for fear I should plague you about it? Hey? Don't be afraid; I shall know how to mind my hits, and shall not be over stupid, I dare say, in giving a guess about the when and the how too, though

I may not happen positively to *know* anything about it. However, if you will take my advice, you will turn your *thoughts* that way, let it be as long as it will before you can turn *yourself*—unless, indeed, there is any particular reason why you should stay here for life."

"For life? Oh, no! my love, decidedly not for life," replied the Major, rather eagerly. "But I don't quite understand, dear, what you mean by turning my 'thoughts that way,'" he continued, with a musing air; and then, after a moment's pause, added, "To say the truth, my dear Mrs. Allen, my thoughts seldom turn for long together in any other direction. The doings here, my dear, let a man be as persevering as he will, are pitiful in the extreme; and it is impossible to think of what's going on every night on the other side of the water, without being devilishly provoked, I promise you—particularly when a man feels that he improves every day he lives."

Mrs. Major Allen listened to this with the greatest satisfaction; it was the first time she had ever heard her husband distinctly declare an intention of returning to England; and though, at the very bottom of her heart, she had determined to do so herself one day or other, even if she found herself obliged to leave him behind, the discovering that his wishes accorded with her own was highly gratifying, and she immediately determined upon opening her mind to him concerning a scheme that had for some time past occupied her head.

"My darling Major!" she exclaimed, "how delighted I am to hear you talk so! Remember the saying, 'Where there's a will there's a way;' and do you only give me your promise that when you *can* go, you will, and I will give mine to push on in every way possible to the same delightful end. I will spend just next to nothing, dearest, in any way;—I will buy no feathers either for baby or myself, and almost no flowers neither; I'll promise not to think of any more satin dresses, if it is for—almost a dozen years to come; and I will trust, for making a decent appearance, altogether to turning, trimming, and satin-stitch. In short, my dearest Major, there is nothing in the whole world that I would not do to get back."

"I am glad to hear all this, my love, very glad. There is nothing like having a few *rouleaux* beforehand, my dear, depend upon it—stick to the saving plan about clothes and all your own little expenses, and it is quite impossible to say what may be the fruits of it one of these days."

"Oh! but you don't know, Major, what else I have got in my head," replied his wife, with a gay glance that reminded him of Clifton; "when we DO go back, it shall not be my fault if we do not find somebody worth introducing our child to."

"Who will that be, my dear?" said he, with a glance almost as gay as her own; "to my Lord Mucklebury?"—for, with a degree of generous confidence which really did honour to her heart, Mrs. Major Allen had confessed to her husband how very near marriage she had been with that nobleman, and how completely it was owing to a mere accidental misunderstanding between them that the match had been broken off.

"It is by no means impossible that I may do that good service both to you and to her, my love," answered the lady; "for I have every reason to flatter myself that what was love, very fervent love certainly, has now mellowed into friendship, and I have little doubt that by the time we return he may be able to see me, and even my child, without pain—though he may perhaps heave a guiltless sigh that he is not the father of it. But it was not of him, Major Allen—I do assure you that it was not of him I was thinking."

"Of whom, then, Mrs. Allen,—of those Clifton people? Pray do not let us talk about them. For, in the first instance, I hate them all particularly; and in the next, they are not in a station of life that can do me, or any man of fashion, service."

Mrs. Allen was not at all displeased at hearing her husband thus class himself; but her change of colour would have been visible had she not worn rouge, when he named Clifton. The emotion passed, however, and she resumed without any trace of embarrassment.

"No, no, no, no, Major Allen, I am not so humble-minded as you imagine. It is not my brother and sister Peters, nor any of my nephews and nieces in that very commercial district that I am thinking about, but of persons in a *very* different station, I assure you. Be patient for a moment, and I will explain myself."

The Major was at that moment smoking a cigar, and continued the operation with as much composure as she could have desired, while she rose from her chair and opened the drawer of a work-table at the further extremity of the apartment. From this drawer she took what might be recognised at the first glance as an English newspaper, and which, though of no very recent date, was the last that had been received in the colony.

"I have promised never to be extravagant again, my dear," said the lady, advancing up the room, and searching the precious columns as she walked, for the article she wished to show him, "and therefore you must not scold me for having bought this newspaper, I really could not resist it when I found this paragraph concerning the very nearest relations I have in the world. Let me read it to you, shall I?"

The Major smoked on, but graciously nodded his head.

"It is the account of a drawing-room held at St. James's Palace, Major Allen—I was always fond of reading those sort of articles even in England, for nothing keeps up our acquaintance with the fashionable world so well—besides the insight it gives one into dress; and here of course it is ten thousand times more valuable still, to prevent one's forgetting the very names of one's relations, and all other persons of rank."

Here Mrs. Major Allen began reading a very long list of persons present at the drawing-room, and at length came to the names of "General and Mrs. Hubert," as being among them.

"I suppose you know who *she* is, Major Allen, if you do not remember him."

"Not I," said the Major.

"What, my dear!—don't you remember my darling niece, Agnes? The girl that I devoted myself to so completely, before she married?"

"What, the little Willoughby, who was so skittish that she would never let one speak to her. Oh! dear yes, I remember her perfectly."

"Well, Major, it is she who is now Mrs. General Hubert, and who has been, as you perceive, presented at Court."

"Oh! she married the stiff-backed Colonel did she? I forgot all about it, my dear. And is it to the General's lady that you are going to introduce me?"

There was a comic sort of leer in the eye of the Major as he said this, which his wife did not altogether understand; but after looking at him for a moment, she replied,

"To be sure it is, my dear. My darling Agnes, Mrs. General Hubert, as of course I must now call her, will be beyond all question the most fitting and proper person to introduce our daughter into society. Nor is there the slightest reason why she should not be presented at court when she is old enough; and it is just because she is not old enough yet, that I am content to wait so patiently till it may suit you, my dear Major, to accompany us back to Europe. But though there might be no particular use in our going, as yet, it will, as I have lately thought, be extremely proper for me to write to my niece, and I certainly shall do so immediately."

"Depend upon it, my dear, I shall make no sort of objection," replied the amiable Major; "but don't you think it just possible that she may not answer you?"

"No, Major Allen, I do not. I know better than any one else can, except herself, dear child! how devoted was the attachment I showed her—and it is not in nature to believe that whenever I choose to recall myself to her remembrance, she

should be otherwise than delighted at hearing from me. I will not deny that some trifling circumstances occurred previous to her marriage, and to mine, which displeased me. However, everything was made up, most affectionately, before I left England, and a very touching scene it was, I assure you, with poor dear Willoughby, her father, who suddenly returned from some place like this, I don't know where, abroad, and brought another daughter with him. A charming creature she is—not quite so lovely and elegant-looking as my niece, but very pretty, and married to an extremely rich young son of a baronet. So you see, Major, the connection throughout is most extremely desirable for our Martha, and when the time comes for our return, will unquestionably be of the greatest importance to her. So write I shall most decidedly."

The indifference with which the Major at first appeared to listen to her, relaxed by degrees as she went on, and when at length she paused, he said, without any sneer at all,

"Very well, my dear; you are perfectly a woman of the world, which is exactly what I would wish you to be; and nothing could be more desirable than that our little girl should in due time be introduced to such very near relations. But, I believe, I have hinted to you before, that there are two or three reasons which should render my immediate return to England inconvenient. I have, hitherto, never entered upon any explanation of them; because, in fact, they possessed little interest in themselves, and were of no consequence whatever to us in our present situation. But if it should prove that there really is any chance of our getting among the set you mention, when we get back, it may be as well to make you understand the affair sufficiently to prevent any awkward blunders on your part, which might be inconvenient. Not that the thing, in point of fact, is of any great consequence; but nevertheless, as it involves some trifling etiquette, that some sort of people think a great deal about, it may be as well to put you *au fait* of the business; and I shall have great pleasure, I am sure, in giving you this proof of my confidence.

"But here comes our friend Belmaine. Remember, love, all our established hints and tokens; and remember, also, that whatever I *do* chance to win will be added to the fund, which I trust we shall be able to lay up for our dear girl's benefit. There! he is obliged to knock again! Why does not that stupid girl open the door? We will finish our talk to-morrow, dear. Only remember that you are not to write to England till I have explained myself."

The worthy Mr. Belmaine here made his appearance, and was received in the most friendly manner, both by the Major and his lady. He was not an old acquaintance, but appeared

to be a very valued one, for nothing was omitted that could make their substantial tea-drinking agreeable; and the little Martha, who with almost precocious strength of limb already waddled fearlessly over the floor, was induced to add her note of welcome, by a wonderfully articulated "ta, ta."

Soon after the meal was concluded, Mrs. Major Allen retired for a few moments to superintend the *coucher* of her beautiful child, and, ere she returned, the two gentlemen had very rationally sought and found consolation for her absence in a pack of cards.

Whenever Major Allen indulged himself in the presence of his wife with a game at piquet, whist, or écarté, the only amusements of the kind he ever ventured upon, his lady had the appearance of being in, what is vulgarly called, a fidget; for she walked about the room, looked at the different hands, and, in short, seemed in search of amusement for herself which she could not find. On such occasions, it was usual for the Major to say "Pray, my dear love, do sit down; you have no idea how you worry me by moving about so." And she replied, "Well, then, my dear, I will take my work, and amuse myself now and then by looking at your hand." And then she did take her work, and sat down behind him, very close indeed, sometimes twitching his hair in a lively manner, and sometimes playfully running her needle into his shoulder, always permitting her animated eyes to invite his partner to take part in the jest. After enduring this for about five minutes, it was usual for the Major to lose his patience, and to exclaim,—

"Upon my word, my love, I cannot play if you go on so. You are as frolicsome as a kitten, dearest, and I give you my honour I can't bear to check you; but, upon my soul, I am such a nervous player, that I don't know what I'm about for two minutes together, while you are playing your monkey tricks. Could you not take your work a little further away, love?"

Mrs. Major Allen could never stand this reproof, but constantly replied, rather in a plaintive tone—

"And pretty dull sort of work I shall find it! I dare say, Mr. This, or Mr. That (whoever the Major's partner might be), will not be so cross as you are, dear, so I will go and sit by him."

And she did go and sit by him, or rather behind him, but so quietly, that it was next to impossible that he should be churlish enough to make any objection to her remaining there.

This little domestic scene was repeated on the present occasion, with just sufficient variation, as to the phrase and frolic, as might suffice to prevent its appearing stupidly repetitive; but when it had been gone through, and Mrs. Major Allen had established herself exactly in the place she wished to occupy,

her attention involuntary wandered from the game she overlooked at the present moment, to the greater one, in which she flattered herself she should be engaged at a future time. The mysterious words of her husband, too, haunted her rather painfully. The spelling and putting together which her active intellect rendered inevitable, produced a result, which, if not quite new to her imagination, appeared at this moment more than usually important; and, in short, it was with the greatest difficulty that she conducted herself throughout the very long evening according to her husband's wishes.

She really exerted herself, however, to do the best she could; and when at length the beef-steak, sweet potatoes, and whisky-toddy were called for, she performed all the duties of a careful hostess perfectly. So that at last, at about two o'clock in the morning, the snug little party broke up, under circumstances perfectly satisfactory to the Major, who gave his weary wife the reward she well merited, by saying, as he drew up the strings of his inflated purse—

"Thank you, my dear—everything was very nice, and very well managed. Now let us get to bed, and to-morrow morning we will have a talk about the best way for you to write home to your relations. It would be a fine thing for our little missy, to be sure! and I think it may be done if we manage well. People talk of good fortune, and bad fortune, but depend upon it, my dear Barnaby" (it was thus he ever addressed her when in particularly high spirits), "depend upon it that it is human skill which regulates human affairs, and that when some great misfortune befalls us, it is because we have committed some great blunder; while, on the contrary, if some striking blessing, as it is called, rewards our endeavours, it proves, beyond the possibility of any reasonable doubt, that we have known how to set about what we had to do, and performed the task skilfully and well. There—don't let us talk any more to-night, because that last glass of toddy has made me very sleepy. Good night, dear, good night!"

## CHAPTER III.

THAT nothing might interrupt the conversation which Mrs. Major Allen was quite determined should not be delayed, she would not even suffer her daughter to appear at the breakfast-table the following morning; but, though the young lady was crying pretty lustily at the other end of the house, ventured to assure her papa, when he kindly inquired for her, that she was fast asleep.

Having set all things in such order that no further assistance from without could be required, Mrs. Allen thus began:—

"Well, Major Allen, I have made up my mind not to let this blessed day pass over my head, without writing to my dear niece, Mrs. General Hubert. I have been looking over the paper again—there is the whole account of her dress at full length, which I quite forgot to show you, my dear. Such taste!—such splendour! Don't you think, my dear Allen, that it is our bounden duty to leave not a stone unturned, that might help to place our dear child among such cousins as these?"

"We will leave neither sticks nor stones unturned, as you call it, my dear. But the matter must be managed very judiciously. There is no doubt in the world that the relationship is quite near enough to render our entering their circle perfectly natural and proper; and considering all you did for that girl Agnes, it can hardly be doubted that she will welcome you with open arms. She must be a monster, indeed, if she did not! Nevertheless, strange as it may seem to you, my dear creature, there will be a good deal of caution necessary in the manner in which you introduce *me* to them."

Mrs. Major Allen put down the portion of buttered roll which she was in the act of raising to her lips, and turned rather faint. However, as she by no means wished the Major to guess what was passing in her mind, she made an effort to recover herself, which was as successful as such efforts always are; and then she replied with great apparent composure, "Well, deary, you said I should know all about it to-day—so get on, there's a good man,—I am afraid of nothing, not I, so speak out, and you shall never see me flinch."

"You are a charming creature, my love, and deserve all the devoted attachment I have shown you. Now listen to me, then, and join your excellent judgment to mine, as to the best mode of conquering the difficulties which lie in our way. But first, I must ask you if you have written at all to England since the death of O'Donagough, or since your marriage with me?"

"Why, no, my dear—to say the truth, I have not," replied the lady;—"for, to speak honestly, I felt half afraid of being laughed at, for the facility with which I suffered my former passion to regain its hold upon me."

"You were right, perfectly right. I am exceedingly glad of this, for reasons which I can easily explain to you. Then in fact, dear, you have never sent any letter to Europe, signed with my name? Nor any announcing your last husband's death?"

"No, I never have."

"And you never shall, my darling!" returned the Major, in an accent of very ardent tenderness.

Mrs. Major Allen looked very much as if she wished to say, "Why?" But she conquered the wish, if she felt it, deeming it best to let her husband tell his story his own way. After a pause, sufficiently long to permit his finishing his first cup of tea, the Major continued.

"No, my love, never! This declaration must, I am sure, astonish you, though your sweet reliance on me will not permit you to say so. Believe me, darling, this noble confidence is not misplaced; and the time will come, doubt it not, when you will thank me for the prudence which thus anxiously seeks to spare you all alarm. The fact is, my love, that an affair of honour, which ended fatally, was the cause of my leaving England."

Mrs. Major Allen did not believe one word of this—but she was an admirable wife; and instead of contumaciously expressing any doubt, meekly replied, "Really!"

"Yes, my love! My unerring hand sent the leaden messenger of death too truly! and nothing but the conscientious conviction, that the wretch who thus fell deserved his fate, could console me for being the author of it!"

As the Major said this, he concealed his agitation, or at any rate, his face, by his extended hand, leaving room, however, between his third and fourth finger, to peep at the face of his wife, and see how she bore it. Fortunately, that excellent and intelligent lady perceived that he did so, and immediately checked an inclination to smile, which might have been disagreeably interpreted. So instead of this, she blew her nose, and then said, very gravely,

"Oh! my dear, there is no good in fretting and vexing about those kind of things. They must happen, you know, occasionally; and to say the truth, I did not think that any gentleman of your profession, any military gentleman, I mean, would have thought much about it."

"You are quite right, my dear—quite right, in a general way. But there were one or two very unfortunate circumstances attending this affair. In the first place, we had no surgeon on the ground. This of itself you know, though purely accidental on my part, lays one open to the most abominable constructions. Then my adversary's second ran away. Stupid fellow! as if any harm could have come to him! In short, I was advised by my lawyer himself, as well as by all my military friends, not to run the risk of a trial. This, sweetest, is my history. And now you will be at no loss to understand *why* I should never wish you to send a letter to your friends in England, signed with the guiltless, but unfortunate, name of Allen."

There was the struggle of a moment in the heart of Mrs. Allen, as to whether she should have the pleasure of telling the

master of her destiny, that she was a vast deal too clever to believe a single word of all he had said, or suffer him to lie his way, unchecked, out of the very disagreeable predicament in which she was pretty confident he was placed. But luckily, she remembered the weakness of a divided bundle of fagots, and at the same instant, determined at once to swallow whatever her spouse, in his wisdom, thought it convenient to administer; and moreover, to the very best of her power, to make all others swallow it likewise.

"You may depend upon it, my dear, I shall sign the letter I am going to write to my dear Agnes, with whatever name you bid me," was the gentle and generous answer of Mrs. Allen, as soon as she had made up her mind to keep her cleverness to herself; and perhaps she gave this promise the more readily, from remembering, as she spoke the name of Agnes, how very little honour, either in her eyes or in those of General Hubert, that of Allen was likely to confer on the young cousin she was about to announce to them, even if unaccompanied by any of the adventures, which she thought it possible might have become connected with it, since they last had the pleasure of hearing it pronounced by her.

"No man was ever blessed with a more charming wife than I am!" cried the Major with sudden gaiety, and probably well pleased at having got through the business of explanation so happily. Then, after a moment's consideration, he added, "Why, my dear, should you not continue your late name of O'Donagough? Upon my honour, I have no prejudice whatever against it, if you have not; and the doing so might, perhaps, be less embarrassing for you than taking any other."

This proposition evidently took the lady by surprise; and the manner in which she now looked up in the Major's face, was without any premeditation at all.

"Perhaps you have some objection to this, my dear? Perhaps the name of Allen is dearer to you than all others?" said the Major.

"Oh! I don't know, I'm sure, anything about that. It would be foolish, you know, my dear, to take fancies when we are talking about business," replied his high-minded wife: "I only look so, because I don't quite understand what it is you would be at. Am I to tell my niece, and my nephew the General, and my brother-in-law, Mr. Willoughby, and all the rest of them, that you are a relative of my late husband, Mr. O'Donagough?"

"By no means, my love. That must inevitably create confusion. What I propose, is merely that you should state yourself still to be the wife of the respected Mr. O'Donagough himself."

"But, good gracious, Major, how could I do that when we go back, after every one of them has seen Mr. O'Donagough, and has been regularly introduced to him in person? And besides," she added, somewhat in a lower key, "they have most of them seen you into the bargain."

"True, dearest, true—all quite true; nevertheless, I do not anticipate the slightest inconvenience from this. I have had the honour to see some of your amiable relations, certainly; and I question not, but they have also seen me. They may likewise have seen your late estimable husband. All this I grant you; but it will make no difference whatever, my love. Do not be uneasy about that. It will give us no trouble worth naming, I assure you."

"I must confess that now you do puzzle me," replied Mrs. Major Allen, with great *naïveté*, "and I don't know the least bit in the world what you mean."

Major Allen smiled with great complacency upon his charming wife, as he answered, "My lovely Barnaby, you are, without flattery, one of the sharpest-witted and most intelligent women I ever met with; and it is only on points, where nothing but experience and a more extended knowledge of the world has assisted me, that I can assume any sort of superiority to you; and even here, you have only to open your own charming eyes a little, in order, if not exactly to overtake me, at least to lessen the distance between us. This business of identity, dear love, is a mere bugbear. A man of any tolerable degree of talent snaps his fingers at it. The late O'Donagough was tall, was he not?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Major Allen, succinctly.

"And so am I, my love. This, believe me, is the only point of difference between man and man, which is really of importance—and even that may be greatly modified. Of course, dearest, I do not speak of cases of daily intimate intercourse. This, I know, does create difficulty—and yet—" Here the Major smiled, and seemed to have some amusing anecdote at the tip of his tongue; but he checked the wish to utter it, and only said, with very matter-of-fact gravity, "Neither Mr. O'Donagough nor I were ever very intimate with these great folks, whose favour you now wish to propitiate; therefore, on that score, there can be no fear of mischief—and now I want your opinion. Speak out, dear! Have you any personal objection to this plan, independent, I mean, of any fancied embarrassment in putting it into execution?"

"No, I think not," replied Mrs. Major Allen, with considerable promptitude and sincerity of tone; for, during the Major's last speech, she had run over in her mind all the reasons which existed against her particularly wishing to introduce the father

of her intended peeress, as the Major Allen of Clifton; and had come very decidedly to the conclusion that she had much rather call him by any other name under heaven.

The Major at once saw that whatever objections might in the first instance have occurred to his proposal, were already removed, and in the fulness of his contentment he gave his lady a kiss, and once more called her his "charming Barnaby."

The mind of this "charming Barnaby" was never idle, and even in the short interval which had passed since the moment when she first fully conceived his project, such a varied multitude of reasons had crowded one over the other into her active brain in favour of it, that she was by this time quite as well pleased by the notion as himself.

Many minor details, however, remained to be settled before they could act upon it; but these were all discussed with the most laughing good-humour, and such a multitude of droll, lively things were said on both sides, that it may be doubted if they had ever enjoyed each other's conversation more, since the first happy hour of confidence at Clifton, when the Major related the history of his former life.

The great question seemed to be whether Major Allen's transmutation into Mr. O'Donagough should precede his departure from the colony, or follow it. In all letters to England, it was of course to be immediate, and it was easy enough to desire that all answers should be directed under cover to Mr. or Mrs. Somebody. But how were they to explain to their South-Welsh friends this singular metamorphosis, if they decided upon its taking place immediately? And what were they to say to their little daughter about it if they put off this alteration of her name and family till she was old enough to ask questions about it? Besides, who could answer for it, as her mother very judiciously observed, that the little angel might not tell tales on the other side of the water, without intending to do any more harm than a playful lambkin when it says "ba?"

"Hush!" said Major Allen, holding up his forefinger, as a signal that he desired silence. His wife obeyed, and they both *were* silent for at least five minutes. He then altered his position in his chair, setting an elbow firmly on each arm of it, and fixing his eyes steadfastly on his fair lady's face, delivered himself of the valuable result of these five minutes' cogitation, in a tone as decided, and free from all the weak vacillations of doubt, as if he had been listening to the voice of an oracle during the interval.

"My dear love," said he, "the thing lies in a nutshell: you will find upon looking through a box of papers left by the late Mr. O'Donagough, a testamentary paper, by which he

bequeaths to you a small landed property in the south of Ireland—I say the south of Ireland, dearest, because if the acquisition produces no visible alteration in our manner of living, nobody will be surprised at it—a small landed property in the south of Ireland—but bequeathed upon the condition that any husband whom you shall marry, as well as all children whom you may have, shall take and bear the name and arms of O'Donagough. The said estate to be forfeited if the said conditions be not complied with, within one year after the bequest is claimed. If you will leave me for a few minutes, my dear, I think I shall be able to find this document."

These last words were accompanied by a smile which brought the Major's left mustache very nearly to the off corner of his left eye; a conjunction of features that denoted a most happy and facetious frame of mind.

Mrs. Major Allen replied by a laughing and intelligent nod; but said, "You must let me finish this beautiful bit of hot buttered toast first, my dear—I have almost burnt my eyes out to do it. I remember the time, Major, and not so very long ago either, when it was no less a person than Mrs. General Hubert, this identical grand lady that we read of at court, who knelt down before my fire to do this job for me. Mercy on me!—To be sure, who ever would have thought of poor Sophy's girl coming to be the wife of a general, and presented at court? And what, if you please, is to prevent our girl from doing as well? I'll answer for it she will be ten times handsomer than that pale-faced Agnes ever was—all she had in the world for her was her youth and her eyes. I ask anybody to look at our Martha's eyes, and say if they don't beat those of Agnes out and out; and as to the article of youth—which, by-the-by, I *do* think is very necessary to the making a really great match—as to that, you know my dear, it will be our own fault if we do not let her begin early enough."

"Most assuredly," was the satisfactory reply; upon which the lady stood up, swallowed her last mouthful in that attitude, and with another sprightly nod, prepared to leave the room.

"Stay one moment, dearest!" said the Major; "do you happen, my love, to have any of the late Mr. O'Donagough's handwriting by you?"

"Oh, yes; lots of it. He was a great writer, you know."

"Do you think you have got his signature, dear?"

"Most likely, love. I will go and rummage his old writing-desk." So saying, Mrs. Major Allen left the room, and in a very few minutes returned to it with a handful of MSS.

"Here are all sorts here," said she, "and a bushel more if you want them, up stairs, with plenty of signatures amongst them. Here's a sermon, look! and here's a calculation of odds

about some horse race. He was such a queer man, poor O'Donagough!—I shall always think he was half mad."

"Very likely, love. There, lay them down. That will do perfectly well; now you may go and write your letter if you will, while I look through these papers in search of *the document*, you know."

And now, leaving Major Allen at one writing-table, we must follow his lady to another.

The last letter Mrs. Major Allen had addressed to her niece Agnes was from the Fleet Prison: she remembered this and smiled.

"Mercy on me!" she exclaimed in muttered soliloquy. "What a deal has happened to us both since then! Little hussy!—she was then in the very best of her bloom, and she made the most of it; I suspect she was quite right in not coming to me. Ten to one she would have lost the proud colonel if she had; and it is just because I see she is up to a thing or two, that I will take the trouble of writing to her now. Little fox! she was deep as deep; and I don't think her Aunt Barnaby was such a very great fool either. Now then, Miss Agnes, let us see if I can't come round you. If it answers, if I can contrive to make her grandeeship useful to my girl, I know who will be the cleverest yet. Now for it then."

"My dearest Agnes!"

"I am not quite sure about that, calling her by her name at first setting off.

"'Agnes, Agnes, thou art mine!'

as the song says. But that will only put her in mind of fifty things that it would be just as well she should forget. I'll begin again."

"My dearest Niece!

"I will not believe that the three short years which have passed since we parted, can have sufficed to make you forget the nearest blood relation that you have in the world: for unless a grandmother is nearer to us than a mother, which I am sure no one in the world can think, a real aunt, your own dear mother's own sister, must be nearer to you as a relation than all the aunt Betsies in the world, let her be ever so rich, Agnes."

Having proceeded thus far, Mrs. Major Allen put her pen into the ink-bottle, and there let it remain while she read and re-read this exordium. "Yes, that will do," thought she, "that is just the right way to bring in her Christian name familiarly." She then resumed her pen and went on.

"It would give me more pleasure in my distant home than

anything else in the world, if you, my dear sister's own child, would just give me a line now and then, to tell me how you are going on, and above all things whether you are as happy as I wish you to be. Short as the interview was, it was a great pleasure to me to have got a sight of your dear father. Oh! Agnes, how the sound of his voice did put me in mind of times —gay, happy times, my dear child—before you were born! Pray give my kindest sisterly love to him, and tell him that he would do me the very greatest favour in the world if he would only write a few lines to me. I am sure that if he will but turn a thought back to his pretty, pretty Sophy, when she used to sing to him so sweetly, he will not have the heart to refuse me.

"I am sure, my dear niece, that you will be glad to hear that I am very happy and fortunate in my last marriage; and, moreover, that at length you have a little cousin born. A beautiful little girl she is, I must say, though to be sure a mother's judgment is apt to be partial. But I really do think if you were to see your little cousin, Agnes, you could not help being very fond of her, she is so very clever and intelligent, besides being so particularly beautiful that everybody who sees her takes notice of it. I have called her Martha after myself, and my dear mother, who was your grandmother, you know, my dear Agnes. God knows if circumstances will ever enable myself and my truly excellent husband to return to our native land; I fear, indeed, that the chance is a very remote one; but it would be a happy moment for me if I could show you and your dear father my child! Can't you fancy, Agnes, what a pleasure it would be for me? But it is no good to think about it, at least for a great many years yet—so many, indeed, that she would no longer be a little child. You, too, my dear Agnes, may, perhaps, be a mother also. If so, you will the better understand my feelings about my darling little girl! I inclose you a lock of its dear little hair, by which you will see that it is as dark as mine, and that already it curls naturally like yours. Though we are so many miles asunder, I hope you will think of me and your little cousin sometimes; I am sure she will be brought up to think often of you. My excellent husband, who is decidedly a person of the first consideration in the colony, sends his affectionate compliments, and his blessing to you and yours. And with every good wish, my beloved Agnes, for yourself and all who are dear to you,

"I remain, ever and for ever,

"Your most affectionate aunt,

"MARTHA O'DONAGOUGH."

She was in the act of folding this letter, when her husband

entered the room. He, too, had been far from idle, and held in his hand the proof of it.

"I have found the document, my love," said he, with his smiling mustache. "Here it is—I shall immediately go and show it to everybody I know in the town, and shall tell them that though I am by no means sanguine as to our ever deriving any benefit from the little out-of-the-way bit of property bequeathed by it, I am, nevertheless, determined that our darling child shall lose nothing by any folly or indifference of mine. I shall let them all know—the authorities and all—that henceforth, for the sake of the chance it may give my dear little one, I shall never call or sign myself by any other name than that of O'Donagough. This is a capital notion of mine, depend upon it, in many ways."

"I really think it is," said his wife, examining the papers he had laid before her. "But good gracious, Major, how very like you have made it look to poor O'Donagough's writing! I do declare I could no more tell them apart than I could fly! How very clever you must be with your pen!"

The Major put his hand before his mouth, caressed his mustache, but said nothing.

"And now read my letter to Mrs. General Hubert, will you, Major, and tell me what you think of it."

"You must leave off calling me Major, my darling,—remember that," said the gentleman.

"That will be difficult at first, my dear," replied the lady; "but I dare say I shall be perfect enough at it before the time comes for our going to England. But do pray read my letter."

Without further delay he did so, and most cordially expressed his approbation.

"The devil is in it, my Barnaby," said he, giving her a very hearty kiss, "if we cannot between us contrive to sail before the wind. Why, here is a touch that is worthy of old Talleyrand himself; this blessing, I mean, that I send them down here in the corner."

"Of course, I did not forget, my dear, that you were the Reverend Mr. O'Donagough, when I introduced you to my family at parting. It won't do to forget that, you know."

"Upon my soul, you are an angel!" he exclaimed, "and I do not believe the whole earth could furnish another woman to suit me as admirably as you do."

## CHAPTER IV.

It was at an unusually late breakfast-table, one bright morning, in the very height of the London season, with windows opening upon Berkeley-square, and letting in through their Venetian blinds so rich an odour of mignionette as to make the heat and dust without forgotten, that General Hubert and his lady were discussing the brilliant party of the evening before, when the postman's speaking dissyllabic signal gave notice of the arrival of a letter.

"From aunt Betsy, I am very sure!" exclaimed the lady.

"From your sister, with a few more raptures about Calabria," said the gentleman. Their suspense was not of long duration; the silver salver addressed itself to the fair hands of Agnes, who took from it a letter bearing most decidedly neither an Italian nor a Devonshire postmark.

"Who in the world is that from?" said General Hubert.

"Heaven knows! It is excessively dirty," replied his wife.

"It is a ship letter," observed the general.

"But the postmark illegible," answered Agnes; and then having, like many other wise people, wasted a little more time in examining the interior of her despatch than it would probably take to read it, she broke the seal and looked within.

The delicate cheek of Mrs. Hubert was instantly mantled with a bright blush.

"Whoever your correspondent may be, Agnes," said the general, meeting the distressed expression of her eye with a look of surprise, "he has no reason to complain of your indifference."

"Indifference?" she exclaimed; "no, not indifference. But how, Hubert, will you endure, even upon paper, the reappearance of my aunt Barnaby?"

"Your aunt Barnaby?" replied the general, with a smile. "Never mind, Agnes, she will not harm us now."

"Oh, thank Heaven!" cried his wife, fervently. "If you can bear it so philosophically, Hubert, I shall declare presently that I am glad to hear from her."

"Especially by a very way-worn, distant-dated ship-letter, my love," he replied, laughing. "But if the request be not indiscreet, for kindness' sake read it aloud."

She did so, and the general's commentary was far from unfriendly.

"I declare to you, Agnes," said he, "that I am very glad indeed to hear so good an account of her."

"Thank you a thousand times, my own dear Hubert," said

Agnes, stretching out her hand to him. "If you had looked, at sight of this epistle, as I *have* seen you look in days of yore at sight of herself, I should have been—oh! I won't say how unhappy, because, poor foolish woman, what she says is true. She is my own mother's sister; and though—though she is, or at least was, all that I believe you thought her, it would have made me as sorry almost as I could now be for anything that did not absolutely interfere with my own dear *ménage*, had you wished me not to answer it. But you will let me answer it, dear husband, will you not? Poor thing! only fancy her having a child, Hubert; what *will* it be like?"

"Very like herself, I dare say, Agnes," replied General Hubert, laughing; "that is, you know, excepting all this," indicating the well-remembered rouge and ringlets by an expressive flourish of his fingers around his face; "such finished charms cannot appear at once; and, indeed, I should not be at all surprised if Miss Martha O'Donagough were to turn out a very bright-eyed little beauty."

"Nay, I trust she will, or my poor aunt will break her heart. I cannot say I have a very distinct recollection of the papa. Have you?"

"Not the least in the world; and yet I shall never forget their *entrée*. How incomparably well your father behaved! I assure you it was a lesson which, I hope, if the good lady were actually to appear before us in person, I should not forget. It was the most gentle and gentlemanly reproof to our beloved aunt Betsy's severity that ever I witnessed; and I am rather proud to confess, Agnes, that notwithstanding my very strong inclination at the time to sympathise with the harsher faction, I felt that he was right then, and have decidedly loved him the better for it ever since."

"If ever there was a perfect—" began Agnes, raising her beautiful eyes to the face of her husband—but the sentiment or opinion she was about to pronounce was lost to the world for ever, by the general's very unceremoniously closing her lips with a kiss.

"We are despicably late this morning," said he, on looking at his watch, after perpetrating this audacity; "and I must go to the Horse Guards about young Belmont. But let me see my boys first, Agnes."

Whatever emotions the lady might feel on being thus unceremoniously treated, they were not such as to induce her to refuse his request. The proper signal was given, and two young things entered the apartment, one carried in the nurse's arms, and the other doddling before her, whose aspect might really have excused, if anything could, the vehement fanaticism of Mrs. Elizabeth Compton concerning them, as well as some un-

deniable symptoms of weakness on the part of General Hubert himself. That their mother should be firmly persuaded that no children in any degree approaching within reach of a comparison with them, ever did, or ever could exist, is a circumstance of too constant occurrence to merit an observation. But the little boys were, in truth, very pretty children, and it was no unpardonable vanity which made their mamma exclaim, as they entered, "I really should like for aunt Barnaby, Mrs. O'Donagough I mean—I really should like for her to see them, Hubert. But, perhaps, if her little girl is in another style, she might hardly thank me for showing them to her."

"Silly woman! silly woman!" said the brave general, going on all fours to accept the challenge of his first-born to a game of romps. "Don't you know better than that yet? Why, your sister Nora thinks her little flaxen-headed dolls quite as handsome as either Montague or Compton."

"You are quite mistaken, I assure you, General Hubert. She neither does nor could think any such thing. The little Stephensons are charming children, beautiful little creatures; but—"

"Good morning, Agnes!" cried her laughing husband, springing up from his station on the carpet. "Don't finish the sentence—but just tell me if aunt Barnaby herself could be more preposterous in her estimate of our young Van Diemen's Land cousin, than you are of these young gentlemen?"

"Nonsense, Montague! You don't deserve to look at them. Let Compton alone, if you please, sir; I do not choose to have his cap taken off. I know how I could revenge myself, general, for your impertinence; I should be perfectly justified in shutting your two sons up for a month, where you could by no device obtain a sight of them. How do you think you should bear it, General Montague Hubert?"

"It would be a prodigious relief, my love. Let it be all arranged before I return," said he, kissing his hand as he retreated towards the door.

"Away with you, dull jester!" replied his wife; but ere he had passed the door she added, "Stay one moment, though, and speak seriously, if you can. Have you really no objection to my answering my aunt's letter?"

"Most certainly not. Indeed I should be sorry if you did not answer it, for it would not be acting like yourself, my Agnes. Answer it by all means, and join my name with yours in the expression of all civility."

"Then I will write directly. Poor aunt Barnaby! Only think of her sending me this lock of her baby's hair! I think I must send her a scrap of these bright chestnut ringlets in return," continued the young mother, twisting the silken curls of the eldest boy round her fingers.

"Take care how you use your shears upon that head, dear love!" replied the General, in an accent of considerable alarm.

"Silly man! silly man!" retorted the laughing Agnes. "Don't you know better than that yet?"

"No, seriously, Agnes—jesting apart—I should not like to have you 'cut a monstrous cantle out' of these most dainty tresses, which are as like your own as it is possible for infant tresses to be."

"And that is the reason you would not have them cut. Oh, you false flatterer!" replied his wife.

"Besides, to say the truth," rejoined General Hubert, putting aside her admonitory finger, "I really think, Agnes, you might hit upon something more welcome, in the way of a dutiful niece-like offering, than a bit of this newly-spun silk. Your aunt used to love a fine gown. If I were you I would make a shipment to Sydney of sundry ells of rich satin or velvet, or something of that kind."

"Are you in earnest, Montague? I should really like to do so, very much."

"Indeed I am in earnest. Your father is coming to dine with us to-day. Let him see Mrs. O'Donagough's letter, and I dare say his heart will be moved to comply with her petition about writing, and perhaps to send her a coral and bells for her daughter into the bargain."

* * * * *

After this conversation, it will be readily believed that such a packet was despatched from Berkeley-square to Sydney, as threw Mrs. O'Donagough (Allen no longer) into a perfect state of ecstasy on receiving it.

"Now, my dear Ma—— O'Donagough, I mean," with her eyes blazing up again with all the renovated brightness of youth, "now, what do you think of the chance of our Martha's presentation? You talk of saving and saving, and scraping a few pounds together, and it is all vastly well as far as it goes, but what will it all amount to in point of advantage to our daughter, compared to her being presented at court by Mrs. General Hubert? I trust, O'Donagough, you are now sensible of the benefit we are likely to derive from the notice and affection of MY family."

"This is an extremely handsome dress, my dear, there is no doubt of it," replied the *ci-devant* Major. "You will look perfectly divine in green velvet! And your brother-in-law, Mr. Willoughby, has really acted with great politeness and attention in sending this handsome frock and coral ornaments for the child. It all speaks well, both for the wealth and good-will of the parties. You must answer these letters punctually, of

course, and we may find out some little production of the country that will not cost much, to send in return. I am quite aware, my dear, very perfectly aware I assure you, of the possible value of your connections. By the way, did not that dashing gay young Stephenson, whose fortune they said was a great deal larger than his elder brother's, did not you tell me that he had married another niece of yours?"

"Not exactly a niece, Major." Here her husband seized Mrs. O'Donagough rather suddenly by the wrist, and stopping short her speech, said, "Bad habits are bad things, Mrs. O'Donagough! You *must*, madam, immediately cease your foolish trick, under the circumstances, your incredibly foolish trick of calling me Major. Don't oblige me to remind you of it again, if you please. It is no child's play we are upon, remember that. I could make up my mind in five minutes, not to care a straw about your stiff-backed cousins from one end of the list to the other; but if I do for the advantage of the child, and to oblige you, if I *do* determine to give myself the trouble of getting amongst them, it must be done in a manly, decided, business-like spirit, and in a style that may hereafter enable me to turn it to account. Mrs. O'Donagough, do you understand me?"

"Yes, to be sure I do," she replied, disengaging her arm by a stout tug. "You need not claw one in that way, I am not a bit more likely to spoil a good scheme than yourself, Mr.——, *alias* O'Donagough."

The *ci-devant* Major looked as black as thunder; he liked not this sportive phrase; it grated painfully on his ear, and it was not till he had twice paced the length of the room, that he felt able to renew the conversation. At length, however, he said, and apparently with recovered good-humour, "This is silly work, my love, squabbling about which of us is capable of carrying on the war with the most skill. I don't believe we should either of us prove deficient if we were fairly tried; and that, it is likely enough we shall be, and on a very handsome scale, too, if we ever really get launched among the people you talk of. I can assure you, my Barnaby, that to a man like me, it is a devilish bore to be kept fiddle-faddling amongst such a set as there are here. Come, let us talk 'em all over a little. First, there's that giant of a general; he is just the sort of man, I take it, to make a great bluster beforehand, and then be led by the nose by his wife when she has caught him; so if you contrive to keep well with your niece, he won't be much in the way. Then there's that sort of a wandering Jew of a man, that you told me such a long story about, Agnes's father; he is come home, isn't he, as rich as a nabob?"

"He did not enter into any particulars, my dear Donny,

but he said something about being at last in comfortable circumstances, if I remember rightly. And I am sure no *poor* man could have sent out such a present as he has done to Patty."

"Well, then, that's all right. But I'll tell you who it is that I reckon most upon in this affectionate family reunion that you promise me; for the truth is, I remember a little about the young fellow myself—I mean Stephenson, the younger brother, Frederick Stephenson. I happened to know that his fortune was about half as large again as his elder brother's. Didn't he play sometimes? I am almost sure I have heard so.

"I don't know about that, my dear, but it is very likely; almost all men of fashion do—at last I have heard Miss Morrison say so, over and over. But if you ask, because you think that one of these days you should like to play with him yourself, on account of his being rich, which makes it so easy for him to lose, I'll answer for it there will be no difficulty about that, so intimate as we shall all be together—for I well remember he was the most obliging, good-natured creature in the world. Dear me! I am sure I shall never forget our famous walk to Bristol, when I was obliged to roll myself over and over in the dust, to save my life from that beast. Don't you remember how excessively kind he was, running back to Clifton with Agnes, to get a carriage for me?"

This was the first direct allusion to any of their Clifton adventures which had been made since their marriage, and a perceptible frown agitated the eyebrows of Mr. O'Donagough. His sharp-witted wife smiled aside as she remarked it. She and her husband had been (as we know) vastly fond lovers; but there is a process which chemically takes place when "sweets to the sweet" have been incautiously laid together, that renders sour, what, before such too closely pent-up union, had been altogether the reverse; and it occasionally happens in married life, that something analogous to this will occur. Mrs. O'Donagough was still, perhaps, a little on *the fret*, and it was certainly no very *sweet* feeling which caused her to set down on a private leaf of her memory's tablet a N.B., to the effect that she knew how to plague her husband when he deserved it.

At that moment, however, she willingly let the subject pass; and, turning again to the copious waves of green velvet which flowed from chair to chair, reiterated her thankfulness, that among all the other good gifts which nature and fortune had bestowed on her, she possessed for a niece a Mrs. General Hubert, who knew so perfectly well how to suit her taste and dimensions in the purchase of a dress!

Of course a correspondence so auspiciously begun, was not permitted to drop by any negligence on the part of Mrs. Dona-

gough; and the same good feeling which produced the first reply from Berkeley-square, continued to dictate many more in the same kind spirit of forgetfulness, as to everything that it was disagreeable to remember. It is certainly possible that both the General and his sweet wife indulged in this benevolent sort of oblivion the more readily, from feeling a comfortable degree of security as to the continuance of Mrs. O'Donagough's residence abroad. Both knew, though neither of them talked about it, that it was next to impossible any man should have married "the aunt Barnaby" from any other motive than a wish to appropriate her little fortune; it therefore followed, that Mr. O'Donagough was poor, and, if so, it was equally certain, that what she possessed would not suffice to permit his leaving the new country where he could "inhabit lax," the paradise of corn and mutton, which spread around him, in order again, perhaps, to be jostled, while in search of a dinner, in the old one—*ergo*, they would stay where they were. With this persuasion to sustain and stimulate their good nature, aided, too, by the kind-hearted sympathy and co-operation of Mr. Willoughby, they continued for many years to testify their good-will by letters and by gifts, the expectation and reception of which formed the glory of Mrs. O'Donagough's Van Diemen existence, while her letters and presents in return were occasionally the source of very harmless amusement among such as remembered her. Mrs. Elizabeth Compton alone must be excepted; for she ceased not to declare with unvarying pertinacity, and it may be with something of undying bitterness, that the having half the globe between them, was by no means a sufficient security against the possibility of annoyance from such a source, and that nothing short of treating Mrs. Barnaby as if civilly dead, could suffice to protect them securely from the horrors of a reunion with her. Most Cassandra-like, however, was the fate of the old lady's pungent eloquence. Everybody listened to her with an incredulous smile; and General Hubert seemed even to enjoy the vivid pictures she sometimes drew of scenes ensuing from the alarming lady's possible return.

"She will not come, aunt Betsy," he said; "but if she should, where would the sting be now? Gone, drawn, and harmless for evermore! Can she divorce us, aunt Betsy? Do you think *that* likely?"

"Agnes, your husband is quite young enough," was the old lady's reply. "I never in all my reading met with a stronger instance of the false reasoning of wrong-headed young love! May Providence keep you from this terrible woman, my dear General, for it is quite clear you have not wit enough to guard yourself—think if your sufferings from a Barnaby would not be increased tenfold by seeing them shared by *your wife!*"

But General Hubert shook his head, and only laughed at her.

## CHAPTER V.

YEARS wore away, Mr. Allen O'Donagough, as the good people of Sydney persisted in calling him, derived very essential advantage from the widely boasted and letter-and-present-proved patronage of such connections. During the last years of his residence in New South Wales he obtained, probably from the consideration this procured him, a place in one of the public offices, the salary of which was its least profit; for it enabled him to import advantageously various articles which he knew how to dispose of at enormous profit, so that he became by every day that passed over him a richer man. The benefits which this same forgiving kindness on the part of Mrs. Hubert conferred on her some time aunt Barnaby, might perhaps be considered as greater still; for (wishing to be on confidential terms with my readers) it must be confessed that, had no such connections as the Huberts existed in England, it is more than probable that Mr. Allen O'Donagough, notwithstanding his advance in all steady economical financial habits, might still have been tempted to exhibit some immoral laxity of opinion on the subject of marriage. But for the hope that the one of all his professions which he loved the best, might be followed on a higher ground than had ever yet been within his reach through the influence of his charming Barnaby's connections, it is pretty nearly certain that, when the time arrived at which he deemed it convenient to recross the ocean, he would have found some means or other of leaving his lady and daughter behind him. These roving thoughts, however, gave way as the time approached to feelings of a nobler and more ambitious kind. Even Miss Martha O'Donagough, his little daughter, began by degrees to take a stronger hold upon his paternal affections. Whether arising from prolonged habits of celibacy or a feeling of doubt as to how long their personal intimacy might last, or from any other cause, certain it is, that for the first nine or ten years of the young lady's life, his fatherly tenderness towards her limited itself to cheruppings while still in the cradle, about one pat on the head per week in the go-cart, and pretty frequent notices that she was not to make a noise afterwards. But a few weeks after the celebration of her tenth birthday, it chanced that a large packet arrived from London. Among other articles, it contained a complete walking-dress for Miss Martha, the bonnet being lined and trimmed, contrary to the usual quiet style of Mrs. Hubert's offerings, with particularly bright rose-coloured satin. The turkey-cock is not more susceptible to the

hue of red, than was Mrs. O'Donagough. The instant that this well-packed article was cleared of its moorings, her rapture at the sight of it became vehement.

"Matrimony has improved Agnes in one thing, that is certain!" she exclaimed. "It is plain that she knows how to choose colours now, whatever she did formerly. I remember when we were at Cheltenham together, that she perfectly pestered me with her recommendations of dull-coloured silks and ribbons. But look at this, O'Donny!" (an affectionate abbreviation this, adopted since the use of "Major" had been abandoned). "Look at this lovely bonnet, O'Donny, and then fancy how Martha will look in it!"

This enchanting bonnet, by the way, was chosen to gratify a whim of aunt Betsy's. She chanced to be present when the purchase was made, and begged so earnestly that this one might be sent instead of any of its more delicately-tinted fellows, that her niece consented.

"Thank you, my dear, you have given me pleasure," said the old lady. "It is agreeable to me to paint to my mind's eye the face of a daughter of Mrs. O'Donagough's, when enlivened by that glowing red. I have almost a mind to pay for it myself, Agnes, that I might have the pleasure of pointing out to you how truly the gift might assume the character of Mercy, by 'blessing her that gives, and her that takes.' Can you not fancy how your aunt Barnaby will look when its glories open upon her?"

And the image which the old lady had just conjured up, was as near as possible to the truth. The *ci-devant* aunt Barnaby did appear to be in a state little short of ecstasy, as she turned and re-turned it upon her clenched fist.

"Let us have her in this very moment, my dear! Do just go out and call her, will you?"

"No, my dear, I certainly will not," replied Mr. O'Donagough, deliberately, and, at the same time thrusting his arm to the bottom of the box in search of newspapers, or anything else he might chance to find.

"What a brute you do grow into!" retorted his wife. "And if I go myself, how prettily I shall find all the things rummaged about, shan't I?"

Mr. O'Donagough deigned not to make any reply, but having found two or three newspapers, was either really, or seemingly, entirely absorbed in their contents.

Happily for the preservation of Mrs. O'Donagough's temper, and the continuation of her enjoyment, the young lady in question at this moment entered the room. Her eye instantly caught sight of the rose-coloured ribbons, and every one who had observed her countenance at that time, must have been

forcibly struck by its resemblance to that of her mother, although in features perhaps she more resembled her father. The little girl had large wide-opened black eyes, which easily kindled into considerable vehemence of expression. The shape of her face was like that of her father's, which was large and long; her mouth and teeth, however, were those of her mother, of ample dimensions, bright in colour, both as to the white and the red, but having a sort of coarseness in the smile, which might perhaps enhance its beauty in the judgment of some, while it wholly destroyed it in that of others. The nose again was that of her father's, high, hooked, and threatening to become of a size more advantageous to a male than to a female face. Her hair was dark, and curled naturally and closely, while her complexion was brilliant almost to excess, being literally, and with no allowance made for figures of speech, composed of white and red.

In person she was stout, strong-limbed, and very tall for her age, and on the whole, presented an appearance which her mother had the comfort of feeling was very little short of perfection.

"Oh my! what a beautiful bonnet!" exclaimed Miss Martha, darting forward to seize upon it. "It is no good, mamma, your holding it up that way out of reach, for it must be mine and nobody else's, because I am certain sure you could not poke your great head into it."

"It is for you, my precious queen," replied her mother; "but it is I must have the joy of tying it under your beautiful chin. Don't crush the ribbons, darling, for your life!"

With great docility, and manifesting considerable powers of reflection, the child stood still while this operation of tying was performed, and then made an effort to bound from beneath the hands of her mother, in order to view herself in a little glass which hung between the two windows of the apartment.

"Stay one instant, my angel!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, holding her; "I never did, no never in my whole life, Mr. O'Donagough, see anything one quarter so beautiful as Patty looks in that bonnet! For God's sake, leave the news for one moment to look at her, and tell me how you shall like to show off such a face as that in London!"

Mr. O'Donagough graciously condescended to lift his eyes, and fix them on the little Patty, and for the first time in her life really thought her very well-looking. There is something, even at ten years old, in the consciousness of having a large quantity of bright rose-colour reflecting itself upon one's complexion, which, together with a maternal assurance that one is the most beautiful creature in the world, tends to harmonise the features, and give a very sweet expression to the countenance. Little Patty stood peaceably for a moment, with her hands

before her, and her long eyelashes modestly cast down, so that when unable to resist the longing desire to look at herself for another moment, she bounded away to the further end of the room, her father said, with great feeling,

"Yes! by heaven! I do think she will make a devilish fine girl after all; and it will be a good thing if she does, I can promise you."

"A good thing? I believe so, indeed! Fancy such eyes and complexion as that, with a general's wife for a cousin, to take her out, and I don't know how many ladies of title to talk of, to all her partners and everybody besides! My dear Donny, if we can but contrive to manage our affairs so as to make a tolerable show when we get to England, take my word for it, that girl will make a match that will perfectly astonish you. I am quite sure of it, perfectly certain. I have seen a great deal of life, and what is of more consequence, I have reflected a great deal on what I have seen. When I talk of Mrs. General Hubert's bringing Martha out, I mean nothing more, I assure you, than the merely taking her to court, and to a few other topping places, where just at first, perhaps, I shan't manage to get invited. But as to everything else, everything that concerns her general introduction among young men of fashion and large estates, I would not accept the services of anybody in the whole kingdom of England!"

During this first burst of conscious excellence from his wife, Mr. O'Donagough continued his assiduous study of the newspapers, and Miss Martha an almost equally assiduous study of her own little person in the glass. The difference between the degrees of intensity with which these occupations were carried on was this—the gentlemen really heard not a single word that was said; whereas the young lady did not lose one.

"'I am taller than Kitty Jones, ma,'" said Miss Martha, standing on tiptoe.

"Yes, yes, my dear! you will be tall enough, and beautiful enough too, you darling angel! Only you must always mind every word I say to you, for else neither beauty or tallness either will do you any good in getting a husband. Now take off the bonnet, Patty. Take it off this instant, when I bid you."

Nevertheless Patty persevered in retaining her station before the glass, first making a pendent bow hang a little on one side, and then trying its ever-charming effect when preponderating on the other. Considering the age of the little girl, it was really curious to watch her; and any observing student of natural history who had done so, would have perceived precisely the same phenomena, which it is so interesting to follow, in the young of all the countless tribes which form the animal creation, from man to a polypus. In each, the leading instinct of the

species peeps out as easily, and with the same providential and unerring certainty, as the distinctive peculiarities of its organic formation; furnishing to a rightly-constituted mind, the most satisfactory proof that each is provided with exactly that sort of acuteness most necessary for its safety and well-being.

But it was not in such subtle reasonings that the intellectual energies of Mrs. O'Donagough exhausted themselves. She marked the more obvious trait of disobedience in little Patty's delay; and, stepping with unexpected suddenness towards her, with one decisive hand removed the bonnet, and with the other bestowed on the offender a very effective box on the ear.

In many respects this promising little girl appeared advanced beyond her age; and one proof of this was her having exchanged the childish scream with which little girls usually indicate their averseness to being cuffed, for an indignant frown, which spoke as great an inclination to cuff again, as it was possible for a young lady to demonstrate to her mamma.

This was a great relief to her father and mother; for before this incipient sturdiness of character appeared, it was by sturdiness of voice that her vigour, both of body and soul, declared itself, often rendering the needful castigations of Mrs. O'Donagough a sort of public nuisance in the street where she lived.

But this was entirely over. Little Martha O'Donagough had cried her last cry for being beat, and now flashed her great eyes at her mother in a style that clearly foretold what their powers would be hereafter.

But, though Patty did not scream, the concussion roused the attention of her papa.

"What's that for, ma'am?" he said hastily, and thereby for the first time evincing such an inclination to take the part of his daughter, against his wife, as showed that the little lady's good looks in her new bonnet had produced a very powerful effect upon his mind.

"Put on the bonnet again, Mrs. O'Donagough," said he; "she looked exceedingly well in it, and I want to see it again."

It was impossible that the anger, either of mother or daughter, could resist this novel and very pleasing ebullition of paternal admiration; they both recovered their good-humour instantly; the bonnet was again tried on, again did little Patty "look beautiful with all her might," and a general feeling throughout the family of that beneficent arrangement of nature which binds a whole race together, let distance separate them ever so widely, caused the father to say, addressing his wife,

"Well, old girl! I won't deny that nieces and nephews are good for something." While she rejoined,

"You may depend upon it, Donny, that blood is always thicker than water;" and the youthful Martha completed the accord by exclaiming,

"I am sure as I should like the people as sent this bonnet, better than anybody else in the whole world!"

From that day forward Mr. Allen O'Donagough continued to demonstrate a very marked degree of attachment to his young daughter. He even in some degree exerted himself to cultivate her mind, and improve her manners. Not, indeed, that he, at any time, submitted himself to the drudgery of giving regular lessons; such an attempt would have been altogether inconsistent with his habits, whether of pleasure or of business. But, apparently, he knew the value of that best mode of education, which consists in the constant and gradual inoculation of a parent's principles and opinions into the mind of a child; and, as far as it was possible to judge of one so young, the result of this system in the case of Miss O'Donagough, confirmed its often-attested efficacy most completely; for in mind, as well as in body, she bore a blended resemblance to both her parents.

The last year of their long residence in New South Wales passed rapidly, for its term seemed within reasonable reach of hope and expectation. The bringing to a settlement and close all Mr. O'Donagough's very profitable speculations, left him little leisure for idle repinings that the desired hour did not approach more quickly; and the pushing forward the ornamental part of their daughter's education, as completely occupied his wife. Both parents were anxious to take advantage of her premature height, and womanly appearance, in order to introduce her in the very first opening blossom of beauty.

"She is but thirteen and a bit, Donny," said Mrs. O'Donagough to her husband, one evening that they were sitting *tête-à tête* before retiring for the night; "I know that as well as any one can tell me; but I'm not going to let her pass for a child, for all that. There are some mothers of my age, and looking as I do, who would see her a nun before they'd make themselves older than needs must, by seeming to have a grown-up daughter. But I'm above any such nonsense. There is nothing to be got by it now, whatever there might be if I was to happen to be left a widow again, and, therefore, I'm quite determined that Patty shall be dressed at once like a young woman.

"I shall not make any objection to that, I promise you," replied her husband. "She is a most uncommonly fine girl—just the right sort, full of spirit and cleverness. Not that I'll promise you, Mrs. O'D., to marry her to the first man that asks. If she turns out as I expect, it will answer a great deal better to let her take time."

Mrs. O'Donagough was about to make a somewhat lively reply, but checked herself, wisely remembering, that if a good match offered, she and Patty between them could manage matters easy enough, let all the fathers in the world do what they would to prevent them.

And now the last busy month arrived, and fatiguing enough was the work they had to go through, in selling to the best profit all that was to be left behind, and packing in the least space all they intended to carry with them. In the midst of all this bustle, however, Miss Patty found the way to escape from doing anything she did not like, and having somewhat wilfully spoilt every article upon which her mother had attempted to employ her young fingers, she was permitted to escape from amidst the hampers and boxes which filled the house, in order to enjoy some farewell gossiping with the young Sheepshanks, and make their hearts ache by the lively contrast she set before them, between their prospects and her own.

It was during her absence that the last English newspapers they were likely to see before they left Sydney, arrived. Notwithstanding the bustle he was in, Mr. O'Donagough set himself down upon the corner of a trunk, while, with his usual eagerness in the perusal, he began to run through the interesting columns. His lady, meanwhile, occupied at the other end of the room in carefully packing the stores which were to console them on their voyage, hardly lifted her eyes from the huge hamper she was filling, but, with exemplary perseverance, went on adding pickle-pot to pickle-pot, and sweetmeat-jar to sweetmeat-jar, without ever pausing to ask if there were any news.

She was presently rewarded, however, by her husband crying out, "My Barnaby!—our plottings prosper! The father of O'Donagough is dead. That old fellow was positively the only person living of whom I was much afraid. I can now undertake to prevent man, woman, or child, from recognising me against my inclination; and may snap my fingers, for instance, at the idea of any of your kith or kin remembering that they had ever seen me before. But I did not feel so sure, nor anything like it, about that old man's natural affection, as folks call it. It is a weight off my mind, I promise you."

"It's all the better, there's no doubt of that," replied his wife, pushing lustily, to insinuate a salted tongue between two choice specimens of Sydney cheese; "but with your cleverness, I can't say I should have been much afraid either of the old lord or of any one else."

"Thank you, my dear, for your good opinion; and, perhaps, you are not much out either. But I will tell you what this news will make me do, which I should not have ventured upon without. I shall always call myself, for the future, Allen

O'Donagough. If anything unaccountable *did* happen, it might serve to prove that I did not pass under a false name; not to mention that there may be more than one of the Sydney folks who may have need to write to me about sundry little matters of merchandise, which I cannot quite give up as yet, and they will infallibly address me under that name."

"But don't you think, my dear, that Agnes and her proud husband, and my sister Peters and her family, if we should ever fall in with them, would be very likely, if they saw you, and heard your name at the same time, to let one remind them of the other somehow?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, who, in that quarter, at least, was fully as anxious as her husband that he should not be recognised.

"They may be reminded of me, my dear Mrs. O'Donagough, without knowing me," was the reply; and as it was spoken with one of those peculiar smiles which she often saw on the face of her husband, and always with the feeling that they meant more than she could understand, she turned again her undivided attention to the packing, and by dint of her great exertion and perseverance, found herself on the wharf from whence they were to take their departure, with her husband on one side, her daughter on the other, and not a single packet either missing or forgotten.

## CHAPTER VI.

NOTWITHSTANDING that the wind was favourable, the vessel seaworthy, the crew civil, and, better than all, the land towards which they were making such rapid way, the very land of promise and of hope, Mrs. O'Donagough and Miss O'Donagough too, were, to use a poet's phrase, "very, very sick." That they should be very, very cross too, was, on the whole, quite excusable, because it is certain that under the influence of the first feeling, everything in heaven and on earth, and the water under the earth, is sure to generate the last.

Mr. Allen O'Donagough, who was totally unconscious of any sensation of the kind, was very civil to his wife, and attentive to his daughter for about half an hour after the malady seized them; but he then became weary of the repetition of attitude, and so on, which was quite unavoidable on the part of the ladies, but certainly uninteresting, to say the least of it, to everybody else; and he therefore took himself off to the very furthest extremity of the ship from that occupied by the suffering womankind, and there comfortably seated on a chicken-coop, with a cigar in his mouth, he dozed in luxury, half meditating, and half dreaming of Crockford's.

Poor Mrs. O'Donagough was greatly to be pitied during nearly the whole of the voyage. It was so provoking to see the pickles and the sweetmeats, over the preparation and the packing of which she had toiled, gradually melting before her eyes, without her having ever been able, for a single moment, to venture them within her mouth! Miss Patty, however, got much better before she had been long at sea, and might soon be seen climbing up upon the taffrail, partly to receive the favouring breeze upon her face, and partly, perhaps, for the purpose of making some of the young sailors come and tell her that she must take care not to tumble overboard, and let the fishes pick out her pretty eyes.

Among the crew of the Atalanta (which was the name of the fine merchant-ship that bore the Allen O'Donagoughs across the ocean) was a lad apparently about nineteen or twenty years of age, who very soon attracted the particular attention of Miss Patty; nay, even Mrs. Allen O'Donagough, in her intervals of convalescence, more than once honoured him by a stare, that decidedly spoke of admiration.

This youth's universal appellative was "Jack," and, to judge by the multitude of occasions in every day, upon which the name resounded from stem to stern, he was a person of very considerable importance in the manœuvring of the vessel. This circumstance taken singly, spoke well for the skill and nautical superiority of the boy; yet there were other circumstances which might have led those who watched him closely to doubt whether he were indeed so very accomplished a sailor. For, in the first place, nobody ever saw him go aloft; and though, as we have said, he was continually called upon by name, more particularly by the sailors than the officers of the ship, whenever they were in want of a hand, it not unfrequently happened, when he obeyed the summons and set to work upon the business assigned him, a roar of laughter from his companions accompanied and followed his exertions. This, however, might have proceeded solely from his great popularity among them, and from the very particular pleasure they all appeared to take in his society.

He was unquestionably one of those happy mortals, blessed by nature with the patent privilege of propitiating the good will of all on whom he turned his bright blue eye. There was no resisting its gay playful glance, nor the smile either, by which he displayed the most perfect set of teeth ever set in a mortal head, almost every time he was spoken to.

It is a long voyage from New South Wales to England; and even those who are best in health, and gayest in spirits, can hardly fail to experience that degree of weariness, which makes every person, and every occurrence within reach of observation, important. Mr. Allen O'Donagough himself, though fully

enjoying those best reliefs to tedium, the breakfasts, dinners, and suppers furnished by the careful preparations of his less happy spouse, so far shared this universal feeling as to amuse himself occasionally by joining with Jack in his good-humoured efforts to amuse Patty.

No sooner was the breakfast hour passed, than the young lady, let the weather be what it would, was sure to be seen climbing the cabin-stairs, in order to get a game at ship-billiards with Jack. Nor was Jack slow in his efforts to meet her wishes. No sooner did he perceive her bright eyes roving about the deck in search of him, than he sung out to any of the crew who happened to be within reach, "Avast there, Tom!" or Dick, or Harry, or whomever else it might chance to be, "Avast there! and hand us a bit of chalk for the young lady." And a bit of chalk, to mark the series of circles that the game required, was never long waited for; nay, so eager were the good seamen of the Atalanta to oblige either the young lady or their blithe comrade, that few among them failed, when thus called upon to use the chalk as well as furnish it; and the ring within ring was often fairly drawn upon the deck, each marked with its respective number, and the circular slices of wood that served as bowls, placed ready beside them, before Jack had concluded his first parley with Miss Patty, or answered half the questions respecting wind, weather, the ship's progress, and the flying fish, which she always came ready primed to ask.

As soon as the game was fairly begun, Mr. Allen O'Donagough might generally be seen approaching, cigar in mouth, to watch the progress of it. Had he carefully marked the expression of his young daughter's countenance as he drew near, he might perhaps have perceived that she would have been quite as well pleased to keep Jack and the bowls to herself; but probably he did not mark it at all, and accordingly obtruded himself without scruple upon their game, generally proposing to set himself and his daughter against Jack, who was a great adept, and often appearing to take the most lively interest in the result.

By means of this constant practice, Mr. Allen O'Donagough himself acquired by degrees very considerable skill in the game, and at length was apt to leave poor Patty out of it altogether, till the amusement was evidently become as important to his daily existence as to hers.

It was not long ere Mr. Allen O'Donagough's habit of bringing all his intellect to bear upon every game, whether of skill or chance, in which he was engaged, placed him fully on an equality with Jack in that of ship-billiards; and then he began greatly to long for a bet to excite anew the interest. A feeling, pretty nearly allied to shame, enabled him for a few

days to resist the temptation he felt to challenge Jack for a penny a game; but it lasted no longer, and setting all considerations of his own superior rank aside, he fairly addressed the lad in the language of perfect equality:—"I say, Jack! what do you say, my boy, to our trying our luck for a penny a game?"

"With all my heart, sir, if you will," was the reply, and to it they set, notwithstanding the openly-expressed displeasure of Patty, who was fain to console herself by standing very close to her favourite when it was her father's turn to throw, and by romping with him a little now and then for the recovery of the bowl, when both stooped together to pick it up.

Mr. Allen O'Donagough was unquestionably much too rich a man to make the pennies for which he now played, of importance to him; nevertheless, habit, and a sort of instinctive ardour for success, even where success mattered not, led him to exert himself so effectually, that he speedily became the better player of the two. This appeared to pique the young sailor, and he likewise was frequently seen practising the game alone. At these times no one ever heard "Jack" called for, nor did any of the necessary duties of his profession appear in the least degree to interfere with his amusement. Poor sick Mrs. O'Donagough, whose greatest comfort was to have a parcel of coats and cloaks placed on the deck for her to lie upon, frequently amused herself by the hour together in watching both the practice and the game also, till at last it struck her that Jack, who, making allowance for his youth, and his wearing neither *favoris* or mustaches, she considered as decidedly the handsomest person she had ever seen—it struck her, I say, that Jack must either be the very idlest fellow that ever took service on shipboard; or, that he was not the mere common sailor he appeared.

No sooner had this last conjecture crossed her brain, than her curiosity became roused, and exerting herself vigorously, she rose from her recumbent posture, and dragged her languid limbs to the spot where Captain Wilkins, the commander of the vessel, stood leaning listlessly over the ship's side.

Mrs. Allen O'Donagough leant over the ship's side too. "Good morning to you, captain," said she, turning up her veil that she might both hear and see him more at her ease. "How are we getting on to-day?"

"Capital well, ma'am," he replied, "eight knots an hour, steady."

"That's good hearing, Captain Wilkins, for one that makes such a bad sailor as I do. And talking of sailors, do tell me something about that young man that they call Jack. I never saw such an odd, irregular young fellow in my life. Sometimes to hear the sailors calling him, first here, then there, as violently

as if the whole safety of the ship depended on his coming, one might think he was just the best seaman on board. Then at other times he will do nothing but amuse himself for hours and hours together with tossing along that bit of wood, as he is doing now. Do turn round and look at him, Captain Wilkins, and tell me if that's the way for a sailor to earn his wages?"

The captain turned his head for a moment to look in the direction Mrs. O'Donagough indicated, and then replacing himself in his former position, replied carelessly—

"It is only because we go on so well, ma'am. Sailors have but little to do in fair weather."

"Humph!" quoth Mrs. Allen O'Donagough, seemingly but little satisfied by the explanation; but replacing her folded arms upon the side of the vessel she contemplated the floating nautili, shining with their violet and silver rigging in the sun, as fixedly as if she were really thinking of them; but it was no such thing; her thoughts had never swerved for a moment from Jack. His handsome face, and his tall slight figure, which, spite of his canvas trowsers and checked shirt, had an air, a look, that seemed so—she was quite at a loss for a word to express what she meant, but had she been blessed with her friend Miss Morrison's familiarity with the tongues, she would unquestionably have added "*destengay*." And then all the sailors, though they called him Jack so familiarly, doing just what he bid them with the chalk every day, and more than all, his flying full gallop to handle a rope now and then, just as if it was done for fun, though as to scouring the decks, or climbing up those horrid dangerous ladders of rope, or any other sailor work, that was anywise disagreeable, he no more seemed to have a notion of doing it than her daughter Martha. All this was puzzling in the extreme, and understand it she would, or else know the reason why.

"But I say, captain," she began again, but turning her head a little at the same moment, she perceived that, most uncourteously, Captain Wilkins had left her side, and was no longer in sight.

"Vulgar brute!" murmured Mrs. O'Donagough in great indignation. "But if he is off, because he won't tell me what I want to know, I'll be a match for him yet."

On first screwing her courage to this enterprise of further inquiry, she turned her eyes towards the head of the vessel as the point where she was at once the most certain of encountering some of the men, and of not encountering their captain. But, poor soul! the undertaking was greatly beyond her strength, and after making a few tottering steps in the direction she wished to take, she was fain to stop short, and seat herself.

But though her walk before the mast was given up, her inquisitorial project was not; and as soon as she had rested herself sufficiently once more to give her poor reeling brain fair play, she bethought her of a scheme worth a dozen of the last, and forthwith proceeded to put it in execution. No manœuvring was required for this, in any degree at variance with her feeble condition, for it was only necessary that she should confess herself to be as ill as she really felt, and call for the steward to help her down stairs to her berth. Black Billy came at her call, and with his usual ready civility sustained the weight of the lady's heavy arm till he had safely landed her in the cabin.

Black Billy was an excellent steward, and to all the multitudinous qualifications essentially necessary to deserving this character, he added a charm, without which all the rest would have been imperfect—for Black Billy was a most accomplished gossip.

"Thank you, Billy! thank you!" sighed the qualmish lady, as soon as she had placed her uncomfortable person on the black horsehair sofa. "But don't go away yet, Billy! I want to give you half a dollar, because you are always so good natured to my daughter and me."

"Tanky, mam," returned Billy, his eyes flashing at sight of the dearly-loved coin. "Madam want itty drop som'at goody goody?"

"Why, I shouldn't care, Billy, if I did have half a glass of very, *very* weak cold rum-and-water."

Billy was rattling amongst his bottles and glasses in a moment; and presently, returning from the mysterious hole in which all the *matériel* for his important office was lodged, he presented the *goody goody* draught to Mrs. O'Donagough, with an air that would not have disgraced the *chef* of Verey's establishment.

"Thank you, Billy, thank you!" reiterated the kind-spoken lady, adding, after a sip or two, "It is very comfortable indeed! But don't go, Billy; you shall have the glass in one moment, and then there will be no danger of its getting broke."

Billy obediently stationed himself before her, and respectfully waited, plate in hand, to receive her glass.

But Mrs. O'Donagough was in no humour to despatch its reviving contents hastily. "You make the best toddy I ever tasted, Billy. I am sure you are quite a treasure to the ship. How long have you been on board her, Billy?"

"Dis is de fust woyage, please, mam."

"You seem to have a nice civil crew on board, Billy."

"Yes, please, mam; all but nasty filthy negur cook; and we must put up wid he, mam, 'cause you know he be but a beastly negur."

"That Jack, as you call him, seems a good natured lad, with always a merry word for everybody. Do you know anything about him, Billy?" resumed the lady.

"Oh! es, mam," replied Billy, with a very broad grin, "I knows all about em."

"Do you, Billy?" replied Mrs. O'Donagough, eagerly; "I am very glad of it, for I want to hear all about him. Who is he, Billy? And what is he? Something out of the common way, I think; ins't he now, Billy?"

This was said in the playful coaxing tone, generally used by people who pique themselves upon their powers of cross-examination.

Billy upon this lowered his voice to a very confidential tone, as he replied; "Now beant he a rum un, mam? He be de oldest boy ebber come aboard, as couldn't go aloft."

"But *why* can he not go aloft, Billy? that looks as if he had never been bred as a sailor; doesn't it?"

Billy shook his head, but said nothing.

"Now *do* tell me, Billy, you must know," continued Mrs. O'Donagough, "*why* did he come aboard dressed like a sailor?"

"Jack, stupy lubber, wery stupy lubber, mam," said Billy, looking extremely sagacious.

"Yes, yes, Billy, so he is perhaps, and something besides that into the bargain."

"Es, mam, es," replied Billy, putting his finger to his nose, "so he bees."

Mrs. Allen O'Donagough now thought the moment was come; and throwing herself forward on her seat, and raising her eager eyes to the face of the negro, she exclaimed, "What? dear Billy! for God's sake tell me what?"

A very comic expression took possession of the shining face that was bent down to meet hers: but, though the fellow grinned from ear to ear, it was with a tone of great solemnity that he replied, "That bees a secret, mam!"

"Poh! fiddle-de-de for a secret, Billy, among friends; tell me what it is, there's a good fellow."

Billy grinned again, shut up his eyes very close for about half a minute, and then said, "Him bees a reg'lar crocodile."

"A crocodile, you black fool!" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, losing all patience, "if you think to treat a white lady passenger in that manner, and not get flogged for it, you are altogether out. If you don't tell me this moment all you know about that boy who they call Jack, I'll inform the captain that your behaviour is too impertinent to be borne, and we'll soon see what comes of that, master Billy."

Billy tried to look dismal, but his ivory teeth would make

themselves seen in spite of him. However, he very soberly took up the glass which the lady had just before set down empty, and very decorously named the number of pennies she was to be pleased to pay for the same. This she knew was inevitable, such being the regulation on board the good ship Atalanta. Fortunately for her feelings, at the moment Mrs. O'Donagough chanced to have the exact sum ready in her pocket, in large copper coin, and drawing the pieces out, she raised her arm, and, with all the strength she had, flung them, with a tolerably steady aim, in the face of Billy.

Insult to a negro, if the tortured flesh quiver not beneath it, is never very deeply felt; so Billy only shook his woolly sconce as if it had been exposed to a shower of hail, and without any symptom of ill humour, picked up the coin and retired.

Mrs. O'Donagough felt very ill, very ill indeed. A violent fit of anger is one of the worst accidents that can occur in a case of sea-sickness. It was quite as much as the poor lady could do to get to the state corner (for the best arranged merchant-ships can hardly be said to have state cabins) in which her berth was constructed; and having reached it, there she remained, quietly enough, for at least three hours; the latter part of which time, however, was, happily for her, relieved by a tolerably sound nap—the greatest blessing that kind Heaven can send to a sufferer in her condition.

She awakened from it greatly refreshed, and sufficiently herself again, to slip off her bed, arrange her ruffled garments, add to her dress a wrapping shawl that she knew gave her an air of dignity, and then, with her parasol in hand, she mounted the companion-way in search of the captain. She found him standing with his arms behind him, still watching Mr. O'Donagough and Jack at their everlasting game; while Miss Patty, as usual, was consoling herself for her exclusion from it, by following Jack's every movement with her eyes, and endeavouring with all her might to make him cheat her papa.

It might be presumed from external symptoms, that every emotion of anger disagreed very violently with the sensitive frame of Mrs. O'Donagough; for it invariably caused an appearance of swelling over her whole person, and she now approached the group, who were amusing themselves on the quarter-deck, with a gait and movement, nearly resembling those of a stately turkey-cock, when some circumstance has in like manner ruffled his plumage and his temper.

Mrs. O'Donagough had not lost flesh during her residence in New South Wales; on the contrary, indeed, the greatest change which her appearance had undergone during the fifteen years of her absence from her native shores, arose from the general enlargement of her person, and there was now, there-

fore, something exceedingly striking and impressive in her aspect when under the influence of any indignant feeling.

Mr. Allen O'Donagough of course knew these symptoms well, and adopting his usual demeanour upon such occasions, appeared, instead of seeing her half as big again as usual, not to see her at all. But he need not have given himself the trouble of feigning, for he had nothing whatever to do with her present emotion, while the captain, who had continued to stand innocently unsuspicious, and without taking the least care of himself, within reach of her arm, was the sole object of her attention.

It was gently, however, that she extended that arm, and laid hold of his. "Captain Wilkins," said she, in a tone of voice which, notwithstanding her inward agitation, was more than usually civil; "Captain Wilkins, will you be so kind as to let me speak to you for half a moment?"

Though a very good sort of fellow in many ways, Captain Wilkins had less of that devoted and undiscriminating gallantry to the fair sex, which is usually found in men of his profession, than Mrs. O'Donagough could have wished; she was quite aware of this, and did not scruple to confess to anybody who would listen to her, that Captain Wilkins was no particular favourite of hers. The captain, on his side, might have been aware of this also, or he might not; but be that as it may, he did not like Mrs. O'Donagough at all: and when, soon after they set sail, the first mate remarked to him that he thought Madame O'Donagough would still be a capital fine woman, if she was not so unaccountably big, the captain replied, "There's no accounting for taste, Mr. Happerton, but to my fancy, she is altogether the most sprawling pattern of a female that I ever looked at on sea or land."

When, therefore, he felt Mrs. O'Donagough's gentle touch, and heard her invitation to a *tête-à-tête*, he looked as if he would not have been at all sorry if his more easily pleased first mate could have taken the duty instead of him. However, he was much too civil to say so, and bending his head with something between a nod and a bow, replied, "At your pleasure, ma'am."

"I must detain you one instant, sir," said the lady, hastening towards the retirement offered by a seat on the opposite side of the quarter-deck; "just sit down here one moment, and you shall hear quietly what I have got to say."

"I prefer standing, ma'am, I thank ye," replied the captain, placing himself before her at the distance of about five feet.

"Dear me, captain! I don't want to bawl out so that the whole ship's crew shall hear me, and I shan't poison you, I suppose, if you do come a little nearer."

Upon this, Captain Wilkins made a step, but not a very long one, in advance, and again placed himself in act to hear. Mrs. O'Donagough felt as if she would have liked to throw him overboard; but this did not prevent her again addressing him in a very civil, and almost in a coaxing tone, as she said, "My dear Captain Wilkins, I think it is my bounden duty not to keep you in the dark respecting the extraordinary impertinence of your black steward. I am quite sure, sir, that were you aware of it, you would take instant measures to prevent anything of the kind from ever occurring again; and therefore it is that I make this point of speaking to you. Is it your wish, sir, that your black negro-servant should insult your passengers, your lady passengers, Captain Wilkins?"

Now, the truth was, that during Mrs. O'Donagough's refreshing slumber, Black Billy had been beforehand with her, and recorded to his master the whole scene which had passed between them; a statement in which the Captain, without any undue partiality towards his steward, felt entire confidence, both from his knowledge of the parties, and from all the circumstances connected with Mrs. O'Donagough's curiosity, and Billy's resistance to it.

However, his answer betrayed nothing of all this, for he only replied, "Oh! no, ma'am, neither black nor white, we must have no insultings."

"You had bettèr not, sir, I can tell you, as far as regards myself. I presume that you are in some degree aware, though not so much as you might be, perhaps, that my daughter and myself are not to be looked upon at all in the same light as any other person on board; nor my husband, Mr. O'Donagough, either, of course. My family and connections, sir, fill the very highest rank in English society, and a young lady who is going home, I may say for the express purpose of being presented at court, is hardly to be considered as the same sort of thing as a Sydney grazier's wife, or the daughter of a felon consigned to her cousins in England, like that flaunting miss that is always trying to parade the decks with Miss O'Donagough, only I won't let her."

"As to that, madam," replied the captain, "I never in my life was guilty of making any difference whatsoever between one passenger and another; if they all pay me honestly, they are all honest people to me, and I care not a straw about their grandfathers."

"I have not asked you, sir, to make any difference; any lady, treated as I have been by an insolent blackamoor, ought to know that he was punished for it."

"And what, if you please, madam, do you think I ought to do to Black Billy, for not answering your questions about the young fellows of my crew?"

This sudden and unexpected retort again made Mrs. Donagough feel very unwell, and she heartily wished herself lying upon the cloaks and coats again; nevertheless her spirits did not desert her entirely, and she continued to say, "Upon my word, Captain Wilkins, you would consult your own interest better if you *did* take a little notice of the difference of station between one passenger and another, instead of treating them all alike, with the vulgarity that seems natural to you."

"My interest, madam, is not very likely to be touched, one way or another, by my passengers. The Atalanta is nowise like an American liner or a steam-ship moving between Dover and Calais; for you know, madam, if any of my customers *was* to cross back again, it would most likely be the King—God bless him!—and not me, who would have the bringing of them."

Here Mrs. O'Donagough became too ill to hear another word, and catching hold of a sailor who was passing, to take his turn at the helm, she got him to help her down stairs; when, crawling again into her berth, she continued to lie there in no very comfortable position for several hours, till at length Miss Patty came to look after her, and by the help of a little coaxing, induced her to get up and show papa in which package the other jars of pickled onions could be found.

For the rest of the voyage Mrs. O'Donagough continued on very unsatisfactory terms both with the captain and Billy, seldom indeed exchanging a word with either, and remaining altogether too sick and too much out of temper to make any further efforts for the discovery of Jack's secret history, if any such were, in truth, attached to him; a point upon which happily, perhaps, for her own tranquillity, she began to be considerably less sanguine than when her researches commenced; for the youth satisfactorily proved his plebeian origin, by never appearing conscious that so distinguished a person as herself was on board.

"How can you bear to play every day with that vulgar boy as you do? you, and your father too, Martha! It is perfectly wonderful to me how you can endure his manners! But any amusement, I suppose, is better than none, as long as we are confined to this beastly, horrid ship. Only you must remember, my dear, that when you get to England, all things will be different. We must have no more vulgar acquaintance, if you please. But now you must go on playing, I suppose, with anybody you can find, for God knows I am too ill to amuse you myself."

Such was the harangue uttered by Mrs. O'Donagough to her daughter when their voyage was about half completed; and to avoid all unnecessary concealments, the soliloquy which followed it on the part of the young lady, as she turned from her mother

and hung over the blue waves as they lashed the vessel on her course, shall be given likewise.

"Vulgar boy!—That's your notion of a vulgar boy, is it?—I don't care whether he is a sailor-boy or a prince—*not—one—single—cent.*" It was thus that she deliberately murmured forth her steadfast mind. "But this I know, that if my dear, dear, beautiful, lovely Jack, will only consent to marry me as soon as I am fifteen—and that's old enough for any woman—if he will only have me for his wife, I won't care neither for father nor mother, nor uncles, nor aunts, no more than if they were so many brass buttons."

Such were the sentiments of Mr. Allen O'Donagough's heiress when she had traversed half the briny space which divides the old world from the new; and ere the remaining half was halved, her young heart was more thoroughly devoted still. But as the adventure which led to this is perfectly novel and highly interesting, it must have a chapter to itself.

## CHAPTER VII.

It happened one morning after rather a squally night, that the youngest boy on board having been sent out to the extremest point of the bowsprit, for the purpose of setting to rights something that the blustering wind had made wrong, became so entangled in the tackle, and by his own unskilful attempts to set it right, as to become too thoroughly puzzled to handle it in the usual way; when, taking an unsailor-like hold of some rope or other, it failed him—he lost his head and his footing together, and with the piercing cry of a shrill young voice, that made itself heard athwart the hoarse grumbling of the fretted sea, dropped into the water.

Happily the vessel was upon a tack, and did not pass over him; so that Jack, who heard the cry, and sprung instantly to the ship's side, saw the body rise at the distance of a few feet from him. It is not by the result of that valuable process of mind called meditation, that great deeds are done by men or boys either. Had Jack meditated, he would have remembered that he was by no means a very skilful swimmer, and probably come to the conclusion that it would be unwise to put two human lives in jeopardy instead of one; but as he did not meditate at all, an impulse which, if not better was decidedly stronger than reason, caused him to jump upon the bulwarks, and plunge into the sea after him.

In an instant, three-fourths of the crew were hanging over

the ship's side, and eagerly handling ropes to throw after him. The captain, who had been among the first to see both the accident and the bold deed which followed, could hardly have been more zealous in his efforts to rescue the lads, if either or both of them had been his own. With his own arm he seized the helm, and put the ship about so skilfully, as to bring her within a few feet of poor Jack, who was evidently struggling with difficulty to sustain the boy whom he had succeeded in catching hold of, while with his other arm he laboured to approach and seize upon the friendly rope that had been sent to help him. But the joint action of the wind and waves made this very difficult, and had not the captain's first order, which was to lower the boat, been promptly obeyed, Jack would never have puzzled or pleased fair lady more.

As it was, however, the adventure ended in the very best style; the young hero and his *protégé* were both laid safely, though perfectly insensible, upon the deck, with all the passengers, and nearly the whole crew, gazing upon them with all sorts of affectionate and admiring looks.

But beyond all question, the person most acutely interested in the scene, was Miss Martha O'Donagough. Like all other good female sailors, this young lady had a strong aversion to remaining below, and no sooner had the wind sufficiently abated to permit her to keep her feet upon the deck, than coaxing the captain to withdraw, for her at least, his prohibition against the appearance of the ladies in rough weather, she contrived to make her way to the side of the vessel, and, rolling herself up in her cloak, with a firm grasp upon the bulwarks, to enjoy the fresh breeze after a very sorry night, together with the pleasant hope that her friend Jack would presently see and approach her.

Nor was she disappointed; Jack did see her, and the next moment came laughing to her side, declaring that she must be a mermaid, to look so well and happy in such weather. Then followed some delightful fun in watching the frolics of the tempest-loving tribes, who never condescend to visit the surface of the water when it is smooth; and then Jack helped to secure her bonnet more comfortably by putting a silk handkerchief over it, and tying it under her chin; and then her cloak wanted fastening, and very often she was in danger of being blown backwards, only Jack was so kind as to prevent it. In short, Miss Martha was enjoying herself exceedingly, when the cry of the falling boy smote their ears. The violent movement occasioned by putting about the ship, which she had to endure without any arm to help her, threw her down, and prevented her seeing either the floating body of the boy, or the noble effort made by her companion to save him. But no sooner had she

recovered her feet, and her hold upon the bulwarks, to which she firmly clung, notwithstanding the requests of many sailors that she would stand aside, that she perceived all that had happened, and from that moment ceased not to harass all around her by a succession of screams, till the boat and the three men let down in her, had done their work, and the two rescued lads were stretched before her on the deck. Then she screamed no more; friendship claimed its rights, and undeterred by any idle scruples, Martha sat down upon the deck, and placed the head of poor Jack upon her knee.

"Avast, my girl!" cried one of the men whose exertions had saved him, "he must not be stifled up that fashion." But the cruel interference was of no avail, for at that very moment Jack opened his bright eyes, and began very hopefully to look about him.

For a moment he seemed puzzled; and the first symptom of recovered memory, was a short, quick, question of "Where is the boy?"

"Here, Jack, here!" responded from all sides; and the next feeling led, as it seemed, to a momentary communing within, for he put his hands before his eyes, and his lips moved, but without his uttering any sound.

Some movement of the young girl then caused him to look up, and he perceived where and how he was situated.

"My dear little girl, is that you?" said he, in a voice that spoke much grateful feeling.

A jovial laugh, and something very like a cheer from the surrounding group, at once seemed to welcome their favourite back to life, and to compliment the young lady upon her kindness. Jack, at the same moment, made an effort to rise, and Martha did the same; so they stood up together, both dripping wet with the sea-water, and as neither Mr. nor Mrs. O'Donagough had yet left their beds, the captain took it upon himself to recommend that their daughter should go below and change her wet garments.

This tall, stout, and decidedly precocious young lady, certainly never looked so nearly beautiful as she did at that moment. Much paler than usual, with large black eyes that shone through genuine tears (for she had truly been most terribly frightened), and, moreover, a *little* abashed at her situation, the young Martha could hardly fail of appearing both fair and interesting to the eyes of her playfellow. Jack looked at her much more earnestly than he had ever done before, and thought that she was not only the kindest-hearted little girl in the world, but very handsome; a fact of which, perhaps, he had never till that moment been sufficiently aware.

"Take care of yourself, my dear child," said he, very kindly

taking her by the hand. "But I must not touch you, Martha, for if I do you will be wetter still."

"And look to yourself, Jack," replied Martha, with equal kindness; "I'll go and change, if you will."

"That's a bargain then," he replied, smiling, but with very gentle feelings, at her *naïveté;* "and when we are all got dry again, it will be something to talk about, will it not?"

Martha smiled too; and nodding to him with a look, the kindness of which was no longer veiled by tears, prepared to follow his advice, and by the help of his steadying hand, reached the companion-way, and descended.

This adventure could not easily be forgotten by either,—neither was it. Jack long considered Martha as the kindest-hearted and prettiest girl in the world; and Martha considered Jack as the perfection of sweethearts, and the model of everything that was handsomest in the male creation.

This occurrence helped on, at least to the young people, the last lingering weeks of the voyage: for not only did it, as Jack had prophesied, give them something to talk of, but the ardent gratitude of the fine lad he had saved, and the daily-increasing interest that Martha testified for all that concerned him, could not but touch so tender a heart as Jack's, who, moreover, always remembering that he was but a poor sailor-boy, conceived a strong feeling of gratitude and esteem for the young girl, whose unsophisticated nature led her so completely to overlook all distinctions of rank.

To Mr. and Mrs. O'Donagough, indeed, all this produced no good effect, but rather the contrary; for Jack grew tired of ship-billiards, and greatly preferred standing by his little friend Martha, as she sat perched upon the taffrail, and with her strong clear voice sang love-ditties to the fishes by the hour together. And poor Mrs. O'Donagough fared not at all the better for this additional leisure of her husband's; for he was getting exceedingly restless, rather bilious, and now and then very cross; so that, considerably before they arrived at the port of London, they both became aware that they had been shut up together quite long enough.

Two trifling circumstances only, both occurring within the last week, caused a short intermission of poor Mrs. O'Donagough's yawns, by giving her something puzzling to think of. The first of these was seeing her husband, Mr. Allen O'Donagough, mount the cabin stairs one fine morning, with his face as cleanly shaved from top to bottom, and from side to side, as it was possible for a razor to do it. Not a trace, not a vestige of either mustache or *favoris* remained, to show what the military glory of that expansive face had once been. The change produced upon his countenance by this operation was very great—and to

say the truth, by no means favourable; for little as we may some of us admire the flashy look which every *chevalier d'industrie* can obtain by only restricting the office of his razor, it is nevertheless certain that a great, high-boned, vulgar face, like that of my heroine's present husband, is in no degree improved by being rendered more broadly visible.

At the first glace his wife did not know him; nor was it, indeed, till he had displayed the whole extent of his large white teeth, in a smile produced by her unconscious stare at him, that she did.

The time when she had almost worshipped the military insignia of his upper lip, and doted on the copious manliness which veiled his ample jaws, was certainly passed, probably never to return, yet could she not look with indifference upon what appeared to her so terrible a falling-off in the striking comeliness of his appearance. She had hitherto never ceased to consider him as a remarkably dashing and fashionable looking man, but now her eyes, as well as her heart, told her that he was not so at all.

"Good Heaven, Major Allen!" was her first involuntary exclamation, "what on earth can have induced you to make such a figure of yourself?"

The gentleman suddenly ceased to smile as she spoke, and answered in a low growling voice, which showed that he had not, like Samson, lost his spirit with his hair, "And what, madam, can make you call me by a name which I have commanded you never to utter again?"

Poor Mrs. O'Donagough was really frightened, and notwithstanding the high spirit on which she prided herself, condescended to say, "Oh, dear me! Mr. O'Donagough, don't be angry! I will never say it again, upon my word and honour. And nobody heard me, you know—that's a comfort. But what *did* you cut off your beautiful whiskers for?"

"You are a fool, Mrs. Allen O'Donagough," was the short reply; and never again was the circumstance alluded to between them. But it cannot be supposed that Mrs. O'Donagough forgot it; or that she could avoid feeling rather uncomfortably anxious as to what motive could have induced so very handsome a man to disfigure himself so dreadfully.

"If it had been only his mustaches," thought she, "I should not have cared; and, indeed, I know that it would have been perfectly necessary—how else could he possibly pass himself off for the Reverend Mr. O'Donagough? No reverends ever *do* wear mustaches, that's quite true; but those beautiful whiskers, that gave him so completely the air of a man of fashion—there could have been no occasion to shave them! I know the irregular clergy, like my last poor O'Donagough,

wear whiskers quite as often as not—not little shabby whiskers either, such as a bishop might wear, and no harm done—but just such full noble-looking whiskers as the Ma— as this foolish man wore; however, it's no good to fret. If anything *was* to happen to him, and I *was* to marry again, I'd take good care to know, if 'twas in the old world or the new, whether there was any likelihood of the man's wanting to scrape his skin, for all the world like a pig prepared for roasting. This one only wants singeing a little, to make him perfect."

The other circumstance which tended in some degree to relieve the wearisome tedium of Mrs. O'Donagough's last few days at sea, was something like a discovery which she at last made, respecting the young sailor-lad, called Jack. By special agreement, Mr. and Mrs. O'Donagough and their daughter dined in the cabin, and at the table of the captain, though like all other passengers on board, they furnished their own provender; but a few pounds additional to their passage-money had secured to them the dignity of this privilege, which was the more precious, because shared by no other passenger. From some suspicious reason or other, which Captain Wilkins had never explained, his dinner hour, and consequently that of the O'Donagoughs, had been changed after they came on board, and fixed considerably earlier than before. Dining, however, is so welcome an amusement on board ship, that nobody complains of its coming too soon, and the alteration was never objected to.

The weather during the whole passage having been, with few exceptions, remarkably fine, it was the custom of the O'Donagough family to repair to the quarter-deck as soon as the dinner was over and there indulge in nibbling biscuits and sipping toddy. Miss Patty, during this hour of systematic gossiping, fared not so well as her parents: for to do her justice, she was not at all fond of toddy; and Jack, of whom she certainly was very fond, for some reason or other was never visible on the deck at these times. That he was indeed not on deck, little Patty was perfectly competent to declare, for more than once had she vainly traversed its entire length from stem to stern in search of him. She could not unfortunately penetrate to any of the mysterious recesses below,—*that* she had with some little difficulty been made to understand was impossible; but she would willingly have ransacked the cabin and all its dependencies in search of her friend, only she found, upon once attempting the experiment, that the door was locked.

These efforts to find her playfellow, however, and the disappointment which attended them, were alike confined to her own bosom; and as her father was, as we have seen, very comfortably engaged, and her mother, if possible, still more so—for she took her biscuits and toddy from the luxurious couch of coats

and cloaks heretofore described—the absence of the lad at this hour, constant and regular as it was, had never been noticed by either.

It so happened, however, the very day on which the Atalanta entered the British Channel, the weather being beautifully calm, and the sea as yet in no degree affected by the narrow and troublesome path it had got into, that Mrs. O'Donagough feeling herself particularly well and lively, scorned the repose offered by her cloaks and coats, and trotted down the cabin stairs in search of a basket in which many hourly requirements were stowed, and among others, the last letter of her niece, Mrs. General Hubert. To this letter, it must be confessed, she had made very frequent allusion during the passage, whenever she could get anybody to listen to her; but, nevertheless, she wished to consult it again now, because it contained something about her darling great-niece, Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of her beloved Agnes, and often as she had read the letter, she could not, as she assured Mr. O'Donagough, exactly recollect whether the dear girl was thirteen, or only twelve and a half.

As it was Mrs. O'Donagough's luxurious custom to wear list shoes on board, she went down the companion-way with very little noise, and applying her hand to the lock of the cabin-door, it turned and admitted her.

Great, indeed, was her astonishment at what she saw before her. The usual cabin dinner-table was covered with a marvellously clean cloth, on which was spread, with great attention to neatness, and even some display, all the requisites for a substantial repast. A single glance, it was to be sure a long and steady one, sufficed to show Mrs. O'Donagough that not only great pains had been bestowed upon the dressing it, but that the articles of which it was composed were of the most delicate quality that a long voyage can permit. Two bottles of wine flanked the single plate, to supply which, the various dainties were prepared—and before that plate sat—JACK! Yes, it was Jack, Jack in solitary state, in his usual nautical, and not overclean, exterior garments, but with the air of being most perfectly at his ease, and of feeling himself anything but an intruder in the place he occupied.

At sight of Mrs. O'Donagough, however, his colour certainly mounted considerably, and he rose so suddenly, and with an air so vexed and confused, that had she not known the captain's dinner to have been long over, she might have been tempted to believe that the lad was caught in the act of pilfering what had been prepared for his betters. But as it was, she stood perfectly amazed, astounded, petrified, and puzzled. Many weeks had passed since she had ceased to trouble herself about Jack and his unsailor-like ways; for, finding it impossible to discover the

secret, she gradually became convinced that there was none, and all interest in him had died away accordingly. An additional reason for which might probably be, that the lad never by any chance came near enough to speak to her, if it could by possibility be avoided.

But now all this reasonable and dignified tranquillity of spirit was again destroyed! That there *was* something very particular indeed in the situation of Jack, it was impossible to doubt, but to discover *what* was beyond her power.

The youth having mumbled something about "having a joke with the captain," passed by her and mounted the stairs, leaving her to all the torments of unassisted conjecture, from which the most accurate examination of the relics of Jack's banquet could not relieve her. In fact, the only thing she could find worthy of arresting her attention was a silver fork—this she discovered, on examination, was made to receive the blade of a knife into its handle, and a little further search enabled her to discover the said knife also, and to ascertain that it not only fitted nicely, but that the style and workmanship of this bit of travelling luxury was of a costly kind.

For mere curiosity's sake she would have liked well enough to put the united articles into her pocket; but as the lively thought arose, the recollection that she was on board a ship coming from Botany Bay, came with it, and she discreetly laid the pretty things where she found them, retaining only the interesting fact that they were both marked with the letter "S."

From that hour to the end of the voyage, which was just five days, including the passage up the river, poor Mrs. O'Donagough was never able to obtain from any one the slightest glimmer of light on this mysterious subject. As the vessel passed Sheerness, a boat was sent on shore, in which she perceived through the cabin-windows as the little craft passed astern, that a great quantity of luggage had been stowed. Unluckily for poor Mrs. O'Donagough, she was at the moment busily employed in some necessary packing operations, which the approach to land rendered indispensable, and her view, therefore, of this parting boat was so indistinct, that she did not recognise the brown curls and blue eyes of Jack, under the foraging cap, that was seated at the stern. Neither did she, from the same unlucky accident, witness the very affectionate farewell exchanged between this provoking boy and the whole of the ship's crew. There was another farewell, rather more affectionate still, which also she did not see; but it was not only her being in the cabin which prevented this, for it was behind a heap of canvas which concealed them from all eyes that Jack gave a parting kiss to Patty.

## CHAPTER VIII.

At length the boat was alongside, which was to convey my heroine, her husband and daughter, to those dear dirty steps, beside the Custom-house of London, the stumbling up of which has occasioned joy and gladness to so many hearts. Our party had, of course, a considerable quantity of luggage to remove, and to this Mr. O'Donagough gave pretty nearly his whole attention; but somehow or other, his wife and daughter got safely into the boat in the midst of it, and the whole freight, after the usual quantity of noise and bustle, was securely rowed to the landing-place and disembarked.

"At last, Patty!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, on reaching the highest step, "here we are. Oh! how glad I am that we have done with that beastly ship! If the sight of every rope in her did not make me as sick as a cat, I'll be hanged! Come, dear, get on; you must not begin staring yet. Bless you, child, this is nothing but the very nastiest outskirts of London. There is nothing here worth opening your handsome eyes upon, Patty. Come along, come along! There goes your father into the Custom-house, as I take it, and we had best stop outside and watch the men bring up the rest of the goods. Lord! what a quantity they do carry to be sure! There goes my bandbox. If your father had not been a fool he might have contrived to smuggle that. But I never *will* forgive him if he does not bring it out again this minute. Passed or not passed, as he calls it, have it I must and will." To all this, Patty made no answer whatever. She was too much occupied and pre-occupied to care for anything her mamma could say. In fact, her thoughts were revolving with the regularity of a shuttlecock between two battledoors, from the kiss Jack had given her off Sheerness, to the busy throng moving in all directions round her.

After an interval, so short as to prove that Mr. O'Donagough was a practised and a skilful traveller, he was seen to emerge again from the portal of the Custom-house, when his wife, who was stationed close to it, pounced upon his arm with genuine conjugal approbation—a manœuvre, by-the-by, well described by Shakespeare, when he says,

**She arms her with the boldness of a wife—**

and exclaimed, "What a time you have been O'Donagough! where is the bandbox? Why surely you have not come away without it? You know as well as I do, that I must have it;

and I'll bet a thousand pounds that is exactly the reason you have left it!"

"No, my dear, it was not, I assure you," he replied, with very business-like composure; "it was because the Custom-house officers would not let me bring it on account of the sweetmeats."

"Sweetmeats, Mr. O'Donagough! Then why did you not let them take out the sweetmeats? You know perfectly well, though now you pretend to look exactly as if you had never heard of it, you know that it is not the sweetmeats that I want, but my dressing box. I declare to Heaven I would as soon have an owl look after my things!"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. O'Donagough, composedly; "I am going to call a coach for you. I shall tell the man to drive to the Saracen's Head, and there you must order dinner and beds. No; upon second thoughts, my dear, you had better order tea. It makes, as I well remember, a monstrous difference in the bill, and we may eat, you know, exactly as much cold meat as we like."

Here Mr. O'Donagough held up his finger to a hackney-coachman, as readily as if he had not been beyond reach of any such luxury for nearly fifteen years. But when, with a hand applied to his young daughter's elbow, he was in the very act of assisting her to mount the uncertain steps, he was startled by the voice of his lady, exclaiming within an inch of his ear,

"How can you, O'Donagough, be such a fool as to make believe that you think I shall go off without my bandbox? I shall not stir a step without it, and that you know. What a thing it is to have a man belonging to one that can't look after such a trifle as that! But it is no matter. I can do it myself!" And with these words, Mrs. O'Donagough rushed into the Custom-house, with the aspect of a tigress seeking her young. There was the same thrusting forward of the lengthened neck—the same eager starting of the protruding eye. And who shall say that there was not the same throbbing emotion at her heart?

Mr. O'Donagough very improperly gave his daughter a look that seemed to say, "Did you ever?" and having desired her to sit quietly in the hackney-coach till they returned, he followed the wife of his bosom with long but deliberate strides, as she won her way to what appeared the most busy part of the vast edifice. He overtook her just in time to hear her say, with astonishing dignity, though panting for breath,

"Pray, sir, will you be pleased to inform me if it is here that the passengers' luggage from the Atalanta has been deposited?"

"The man who is now passing down the room, ma'am, can tell you," was the reply.

Mrs O'Donaghough objects to the custom of the Custo

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Away flew Mrs. O'Donagough after the individual thus indicated; but the man moved quickly, and it became speedily evident that she must raise her voice to overtake him.

"Will you tell me where the luggage from the Atalanta is stowed?" screamed the flying lady, at the very highest pitch of her voice. But this effort also was in vain, for a multitude of other sounds blended themselves with the voice of Mrs. O'Donagough, and the official hurried on. Vexed, heated, weary, but more determined than ever to perform what she had undertaken, if only to prove how wretchedly inefficient in all such matters her husband must be, she continued to run on with all the velocity that a heavy cloak, and the ample volume of her own person would permit, till at length the man she was pursuing stopped, and at the same instant her eye caught sight of the bandbox, the abduction of which from the boatman who brought them on shore, had caused her so much inquietude.

"This is it, this is the box I want, sir!" she exclaimed, extending her arm to seize her recovered treasure.

"By your leave, ma'am," said another official, taking hold of it with professional firmness, but perfect civility, "it is going this way."

"It *can't* go that way, sir—I must have it. I do assure you it is perfectly impossible for me to get into the coach without it, and I am quite confident, that, as a gentleman, you can't refuse to let me take away such a trifle as this one bandbox."

"It has been looked into," said another officer, "and is crammed full of sweetmeats. It must pay duty."

"Dear me!—pay duty, sir, for a dressing-box? I don't care a straw for the sweetmeats, comparatively speaking, and Mr. O'Donagough must of course pay the duty, if he chooses to have them—all I ask is for my dressing-box, and I shall think it a most disgraceful thing to the English nation, if a lady is to have her very dressing-box taken from her the moment she puts her feet on English ground. I am sure the very savages themselves would know better! And what's more, I don't believe it is legal to seize it, for I have used the same and no other for years and years, and you may depend upon it that if there *is* anything illegal in the matter, the thing won't pass without notice. My connections are not in a rank of life to permit anything of that kind. It may be all very well for common people to have their property snatched out of their hands this way, but it won't do for the aunt of General Hubert!"

Mr. O'Donagough, who had by this time reached her side, stood with more *nonchalance* than was quite amiable, while his indignant wife thus exerted herself. Nay, some persons might even have suspected that he was base enough to quiz the vehe-

ment energy of her pleadings; for not only did he remain
fectly silent, but now and then exchanged such a look with
individual with whom she was contesting the legality of
transaction, as might have easily been construed into joinin
the laugh against her. Fortunately for the preservation of
King's peace, on the spot sacred to the collection of his
customs, Mrs. O'Donagough was too completely occupied tc
aware of this, and it was only when at length she ceased
speak, that she perceived her husband beside her.

"I *do* wonder, Mr. O'Donagough," she then began, "
you can stand there like a statue, without ever uttering a sil
syllable, good, bad, or indifferent! I do believe you are
only man in the whole civilised world who would let all
trouble of travelling fall upon his wife in this way. Pray,
do make the people understand that the coach is waiting
me, and that it is impossible I should go without my dressi
box!"

"Why, my dear, you and I don't do business in the s
way. Pray, sir, how long will it be before our things can
passed? These are the articles in this corner—just one dc
packages, great and small. When will they be looked ove
"Within an hour, sir."

"Now, then, my dear, make up your mind. Will you
here yourself one hour, till you can see the whole lot sent
Or will you go on to the Saracen's Head, and leave me here
get it done? Or will you prefer my going with you, and
turning here again after I have seen you and Martha sa
lodged?"

There is hardly anything in the world so provoking, w
one has worked oneself up to a considerable degree of ener
as to be made to perceive, as plainly as that two and two m
four, that no energy at all was necessary. Mrs. O'Donago
would at that moment have given anything short of her d
sing-box, if without danger she could have bestowed upon
husband a good cuff; but she restrained herself, and o
replied, "Oh! pray do not trouble yourself to go with us
am sure I hope there is nothing going to happen in which
could do any good. Stay, if you like, and as long as you li
and let all the things be seized one after another, without p
ting out your finger to prevent it. I don't care a straw ab
it. It would be convenient, certainly, for me to get my dr
sing-box before I go, but as you do not choose to take
trouble about it, of course I must submit. Few gentlemer
fancy, would like to see their wives treated in this sort of w
particularly about a thing that I took out of England mys
years and years ago. However, I shall say no more about
I know the transaction to be perfectly infamous in every w

and that's all I have to say on the subject. General Hubert, or Lady Elizabeth either, will be able to tell me whether it will be worth my while to take any further notice of it. The importance of the thing itself is comparatively nothing—but no man of spirit, I presume, would choose that his wife should be treated with fraud and indignity—that's all I wish to observe."

This speech was intended for all within hearing, but it is doubtful whether any one besides her husband heard a syllable of it. There is, perhaps, no place in which the constitutional propensity of the gentler sex to relieve their full hearts in words, is endured with more unresisting passiveness than in scenes of active public business. The stream is generally permitted to flow on without let or hindrance; and if, as usually happens, no attention is paid to it, the obvious reason lies in the judicious earnestness of the functionaries to perform the ladies' wishes, without pausing even to listen to their eloquent expression of them.

Mrs. O'Donagough waited a few seconds for an answer, but receiving none, either from her husband or any one else, she turned suddenly round upon a person actively engaged in the examination of a host of trunks just arrived from France, and, said, "Am I to have my dressing-box, sir, or not?"

The man looked up at her for an instant, but pursued his employment without answering.

"What insufferable insolence!" she exclaimed, fronting round again to Mr. O'Donagough; "I am perfectly persuaded that there is no nation in the world where such conduct would be endured, except this! And I believe also," she continued, somewhat in a lower voice, and preparing to leave the room,—"I believe also that there is not another man in existence who would suffer his wife to be thus treated without resenting it."

"You will get these things in the corner looked over next, will you?" said Mr. O'Donagough, with the most perfect composure.

"Yes, sir, I will," replied the man he addressed, with such unalterable civility, that Mrs. O'Donagough began to suspect, no scolding, however violent, could do any good; and having fortunately arrived at this conclusion, she condescended to take her husband's arm and walk off; muttering, however, the whole way some very biting observations on the difference between some men and other men. But Mr. O'Donagough was in no humour to make a fuss about it, and continued to whistle "Oh! the roast beef of Old England, and, oh! the old English roast beef," till they reached the hackney-coach, in which they had left their young daughter.

Many papas and mammas would have felt some scruple, if not a little fear, at the idea of leaving a young lady of fourteen in

a scene so noisy and so new, as the street in front of the London Custom-house: but it is more than probable that they both of them knew sufficiently well the excellent condition of the young Martha's nerves, to prevent all notion of such idle alarms. They found her, as most likely they expected, still unsatiated with the delight of staring at all the people, and all the carts, and all the horses, and all the boxes, which were passing in a whirling maze before her view.

"Well, chicken!" cried her father, inserting his face between that of his wife and the window of the hackney-coach, "are you not tired of waiting for us?"

"Tired?" replied the young lady; "not I; never saw such fun in my life. What have you been doing, mamma, all this time? It is a thousand pities you should not have seen all these people pass. There must be some monstrous great arrival in England, to-day, I'am sure."

Mr. O'Donagough laughed. "I am glad you have been amused, chick," said he, standing a little aside, while his lady was getting into the coach; "and I should like very well to hear all you have got to say about it. But you must tell me all when I come."

"Lor, papa, you ain't going to stay here, are you?" said Martha, in a voice that betokened disappointment.

"How can you be so absurd, child?" said her mother, sharply, drawing up the window of the coach within exactly one inch of her husband's nose. "For God's sake let us make him useful if we can. He is by no means too well inclined that way, I promise you."

When a factious and rebellious spirit gets possession of a woman, it gives her a degree of courage that is often quite astonishing. Mrs. O'Donagough knew, as well as she did that the sun would rise on the morrow, that however enduringly her husband might receive for a time, the rebukes and scoffings of her contumacious spirit, he would settle the account fairly with her at last, and this with a manly preponderance of force, which to any woman possessed of less audacious vigour of mind, would have been really alarming. Perhaps, indeed, Mrs. O'Donagough herself, was not always entirely free from trepidation, when these moments of retribution arrived; yet it was very rarely that the fear of them was sufficiently powerful to check her conjugal vivacities.

Mr. O'Donagough did not like having the coach-window drawn up within an inch of his nose, and employing the skilful manœuvre by which servants outside a carriage let down a glass forgotten by the ladies within, he managed to remove the barrier thus interposed between himself and his "womankind."

"What the devil is the matter with you, madam?" said he, in a voice that caused more than one passing eye to turn round upon him. "Don't tire me, Mrs. O'Donagough," he added, in a lower tone, "or by Jove you may wish I had left you behind at Sydney."

Mrs. O'Donagough was at this moment very advantageously situated for receiving the burst of wrath which she knew had been accumulating during the last half-hour. She dared not, indeed, attempt to draw up the window again, but raising herself on her feet as nearly as the roof of the carriage would let her, she sat down again in the corner with a degree of vehemence, which made the crazy springs of the vehicle dip under her as if never to rise again; and in lieu of her magnificent countenance, presented so broad, thick, and seemingly impregnable a shoulder to her spouse, that he felt he was worsted, and showing his large row of still white teeth to his daughter, as with a backward movement of his thumb he pointed to the massive shoulder, he stepped back upon the pavement, calling out at the same time to the coachman, to "Drive to the Saracen's Head, Snow Hill."

Martha made a movement that brought her face parallel to the opposite window, and her shoulders to those of her mamma's, so that the laugh produced by her papa's facetiousness was not observed.

"Brute!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, as the carriage drove off.

"Oh! my gracious—what a beautiful bonnet that is! And that—and that," cried the young lady, as they passed a shop-window; "shouldn't I look beautiful, mamma, with those green feathers?"

"Perhaps you might, my dear," replied her mother; "and you must be as sharp as a needle, Patty, I can tell you that, to get what you want out of your skinflint father. He'll be smart enough himself, I'll answer for him, for he is as vain as an old peacock; but as for us, and our appearance, he won't care much, I dare say; and a hard tug we shall have, before we get anything decent out of him. Mark my words, if we don't."

Of her two parents, Miss O'Donagough decidedly liked her papa the best; but she was already much too good a tactician to let this appear before the eyes of her mamma. She felt, indeed, her daily increasing power over both, and as deliberately determined to make the most of it, as if she had studied the curious and incalculable effect of skilfully-applied domestic influence for years.

One means which she had long ago discovered, as beyond all others effectual in promoting this, was the seizing of every

safe opportunity of making each fond parent believe that she was quite willing, if she dared, to become his or her partisan, upon all occasions, against the other. Some idea of her acute and almost precocious talents may be gathered from the fact, that she had already persuaded her father of her perfect enjoyment of all the ridicule he from time to time slily threw upon his lady; and her mother, that she considered her as exceedingly ill-used, whenever she failed of having her own way in every contest she fell into, with her master and her lord.

* * * * * *

Mrs. O'Donagough had changed but little in her feelings and principles of action, since the day when she arrived at the hotel at Exeter, with her niece Agnes and Betty Jacks. She still bore herself as one deserving of all deference and respect, and called about her on arriving at the Saracen's Head, as if nobody so great had ever driven under its awful sign before.

The first waiter who met her passed on, exciting thereby her deepest indignation; but at length her loud and dignified demand, "Can we have beds and supper here?" produced something like the desired effect; and she was ushered into a little dusky, dirty, up-stairs sitting-room, from the window of which, however, Martha had the gratification of finding that she could look out upon the street. It was the latter end of the month of August, and no one perhaps but a young lady just escaped from the ship that had brought her from New South Wales, could have found such keen delight in gazing upon the hot and dusty precincts of Snow-hill. To her, however, it was a sort of opening paradise, in which she fancied she could dwell for ever without becoming weary.

"What quantities of carriages, mamma! And, oh! good gracious, the men! and such bonnets and flowers! If papa won't give us some money, I am sure we shall grow wild."

"Yes, to be sure we shall," replied her mother, who, with her hand on her daughter's shoulder, and her head protruded farther still than that of the young lady, hung over the pavement, enamoured of all the metropolitan splendour she saw passing there.

"London is a glorious place; there is no doubt of that, mamma," said Martha.

"The finest in the world—everybody says so; and I am sure it is impossible to stand here and doubt it," replied her mother. "But do you know, Patty, I am dying with hunger. I suppose your father would kill us if we ordered tea before he came."

"I am sure it would be very savage of him to want to keep us starving here, while he is amusing himself with all the beautiful things as he comes along," replied the young lady.

"Well, my dear, if you have courage to face it, I don't care. He was in a brutal ill-humour when we drove off; but, I suppose, if you tell him that you were feeling so sick and faint that you thought you should die, he won't say much about it. So, if you feel courage for it, I'll ring."

"Oh, lor! mamma, I feel courage enough, if that's all. I'm sure I could eat a dozen rounds of buttered toast for my own share. Ring away, mamma, I'll stop papa's mouth when he comes. You see if I don't."

Thus encouraged, Mrs. O'Donagough did ring, and her liberal orders given quite in the Silverton-park style, for tea, toast, muffins, eggs, cold chicken, and ham, were obeyed with admirable promptitude, and the mother and daughter had got half through the tea-urn, and very nearly quite through all the eatables upon the table, when Mr. Allen O'Donagough made his appearance.

"Civil and obliging, upon my word," he exclaimed, with "*a touch of very natural feeling*," as he entered the room. "While I have been fagging like a blackamoor to get your cursed things through the customs, you two sit down and devour everything that is to be had, without troubling yourselves for a single instant to think of me."

"If you say that, you are a very wicked man, because you will tell fibs," replied his daughter. "We did think of you, and talk of you, too, a great deal, before we set to. And it was I told mamma that I was sure as sure, that you wouldn't and couldn't be angry. Just think, papa, the difference of sitting stock stone still up here, longing for a morsel of food to keep soul and body together, and being busy and blithe in the midst of all the beautiful sights like you have been."

While saying these words, Martha employed herself in preparing on one fork a huge collop of ham, with a lump of fowl to match it, and on another, an equally full sized morsel of boiled beef, daintily covered with mustard.

"Now, here's what I call two beautiful mouthfuls. Open your gills, papa. This one first, 'cause the mustard is strongest. Well, how d'ye like it? Very good, is it? I thought so. Now this. And that's very good, too, it seems, by your manner of munching it. Now say if I haven't thought about you! I told mamma I'd stop your mouth; and all you've got to do is just to say which you like best, and more will come of it, I'll be bound, as soon as you order it."

There was something so exceedingly clever, and so prettily playful, in this device of the young Martha to restore her hungry

father's good humour, that both parents were delighted with it. Mrs. O'Donagough got up laughing and rang the bell without being bid; and Mr. O'Donagough pinched his daughter's cheek, called her a saucy hussy, and said that he'd be hanged if there was such another girl of her years in Europe, or out of it.

## CHAPTER IX.

It will easily be imagined that Mr. and Mrs. O'Donagough, notwithstanding their occasional little tiffs, had found a sufficient number of tranquil moments on board ship, to discuss very fully the important question of what it would be best to do with themselves on first arriving in London. Mrs. O'Donagough very naturally declared, that her first and dearest object would be to throw herself into the arms of her beloved Agnes, and once more to embrace the brother of her fond young memory, Mr. Willoughby; for which reasons, Berkeley-square rose, as it were, spontaneously to her lips, every time the subject of settling themselves was mentioned.

But Mr. O'Donagough, who in one way or another had contrived to learn more facts concerning the movements of the fashionable world, than had hitherto fallen within the scope of his wife's observation, undertook to assure her, that in the month of August there was no chance whatever of finding either Mrs. Hubert or Mr. Willoughby in London. It was, therefore, necessary to consider what was most desirable in the second degree; and the affectionate Mrs. O'Donagough hinted, just before they left the vessel, that her feelings were becoming so strongly imperative for a reunion, that what *she* should best like would be, to follow her relatives wheresoever they might be, in town or country, sea-side or hill-side, amidst the enchanting dissipation of a watering-place, or the soberer joys of their own rural home. But Mr. O'Donagough thought it might be more prudent to decide for or against this, according to circumstances, and the discussion had been broken off unfinished, by the arrival of the custom-house officers on board.

It was now revived again, over the substantial tea-table, at the Saracen's Head, both parties enjoying the advantage of restored good-humour, and the only difference in their mode of treating the subject being, that the lady truly believed the question as to whether they should follow General Hubert to his country-house to be in doubt, whereas the gentleman exceedingly well knew that it was not.

Mr. Allen O'Donagough certainly had his faults like other mortals, but a positive love of wrangling was not one of them;

and though, of course, like all other sensible married men, he felt the necessity of having his own way, he always achieved it with as little quarrelling as possible. He knew that "his Barnaby" was a high-spirited woman, by no means disposed to trot very easily under the matrimonial yoke, and decidedly preferring a little skirmish now and then, though she knew that she must yield eventually, to the contemptible submissiveness of living as if she had no will of her own at all. It had therefore become almost habitual to him at all family consultations, respecting the subject of which he had made up his mind beforehand, to let her go on arguing as if it were still in doubt, and uttering his fiat only at the moment when he could walk off, and hear no more about it.

Respecting the immediate manner of their settling themselves in England, however, he had *not* quite made up his mind. Not that he had the slightest intention of scouring the country in pursuit of General Hubert, and still less of quartering himself upon his household; any advantages to be derived from that quarter, he was quite aware, must be sought for cautiously, and, on his part at least, with considerable tact. But, notwithstanding all his boasting on the subject of identity, he had still a few nervous doubts as to the prudence of launching himself once more upon the town. True, his sphere of action would be greatly changed; his age was changed; his beard, with all its fancy *et ceteras*, was changed; and, though not equally important, his name was changed. Moreover, it was exceedingly probable that the set he had left had changed too; so that, on the whole, he was pretty sanguine as to the possibility of settling himself as a gentleman of fashion and fortune in London. He really believed that "his Barnaby" might assist him in this; which belief assuredly turned aside many a *strong* word, which without it might have chanced to wound her ears; and it was now with all possible civility that he listened to her, as she again burst forth with all the vehemence of strong affection on the subject of finding out and following Mrs. General Hubert.

"I don't think I *can* live, my dear Donny, till the time you say they are likely to come to town, without seeing her!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, laying aside upon the margin of her plate the chicken-bone she had been polishing. "Think what a time it is!"

"Very true, my dear! only we shall gain one advantage that ought to console you. Were Mrs. Hubert in town at this moment, Mrs. O'Donagough, I should deem it very disadvantageous to introduce Martha to her. You may depend upon it, that none of the finery you may have brought over will be of the right sort here."

"*That* I have no doubt in the world is true," replied his wife, rejoicing beyond measure at this positive evidence of his intending to "*new rig*" them. "Even Patty herself, dear creature! young as she is, feels *that*, and was just saying so, as we came along. But, Lord bless you, my dear Donny, all that can be set to rights in no time, in such a place as London, if you will but let us have the money."

"No doubt of it, dear; but we must be exceedingly careful, I do assure you, in all things concerning that most important article. On some occasions it must be spent, and freely too. There is no help for it if we hope to do anything important. But, for that very reason, we must keep a tight hand over it, where we may do so without danger. Not that I mean to deny you and Patty fine clothes. Quite the contrary. I know they will be often necessary; and, if things go well, you shall have them."

On hearing this, Martha left her place at the table, where, to say truth, she had made such good use of her time, as to make her remaining there any longer quite unnecessary, and walking round to her father's chair, testified the satisfaction his last words had afforded her, by giving him a kiss.

"What, you like to hear that, do you, Pat? Well, be a good girl, and do in all things as I bid you, and you shall be as fine as a queen. So butter me a piece of toast."

"Well, but my dearest O'Donagough," said his wife, quite as well pleased by language so encouraging as her daughter, and altogether in a state of mind the most enviable, "you must not forget my darling Agnes! And you may be quite sure, dear, that where *she* is, we may show off Patty to advantage. For people in their rank of life never *do* poke themselves in out-of-the-way places. Therefore I vote for driving to Berkeley-square, learning from the servants where the family are passing the summer, taking a lodging for a week, just for the purpose of getting the things we most want, and then setting off to enjoy the exquisite pleasure, the heartfelt satisfaction of placing my lovely child in the bosom of my niece, and receiving her little ones into mine! Shall it be so, dearest O'Donagough? Tell me, is there any objection to a plan so every way delightful?"

"None in the world, my dear," replied her husband, gravely proceeding with his meal. "Ring the bell, Patty, my dear; I must have a slice or two more ham."

"Then I may consider it as settled? Only think! in a week's time I shall present my child, my own beautiful daughter, to the wife of a general! to a lady received at court! with dozens of titles among her nearest relations; and, nevertheless, our nearest relation into the bargain. I'll be hanged, Donny, if it does not all seem like a dream!"

"I dare say it does, my dear. Give me that back-bone, Patty, and thigh along with it, if you will."

"Then we may consider it as a settled thing, dear O'Donagough, that we are to follow the Huberts immediately?"

"You may consider it as a settled thing, my love, that to set you and Patty off in the very best style is what I intend to do; and your relations, of course, ought to be among the first to see it."

Mrs. Allen O'Donagough was wise enough to take counsel with herself before she said any more upon the subject; and being, notwithstanding all their seeming consultations on the subject, most utterly ignorant of all her husband's real plots and plans, she was, on the whole, inclined to flatter herself that her wishes respecting their immediate destination would be attended to; for, as she justly observed to her daughter, when they were alone, "clever as Mr. O'Donagough is about most things, it is quite impossible he should know as much about the *dear Huberts* as I do!"

Thus, on the whole, their first evening in London was passed in great domestic harmony; but Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter both declaring themselves early ready for bed, Mr. O'Donagough affectionately advised them to yield to the inclination, and saying, almost in the words of Prospero—

'Tis a good dulness,

bid them good night, with the assurance that though he was obliged to go out for half an hour, to get a refractory razor put in order, he should also, probably, be very early in bed. He then kindly lighted candles for them, nay, even opened the door with a smile so gracious, and manner so observant, that Mrs. O'Donagough was forcibly reminded of the fascinations of other days; and when he again wished her good night, as she passed out, she too looked up at him, with a glance as like her former glances as she could make it, at the same time, however, patting his chin playfully, she said, "Oh! why did you cut off your whiskers, dear?"

"Why did I cut off my whiskers?" he repeated, as soon as the door was closed behind them. "That I might sally forth, my charming Barnaby, as I will do this night, with the delightful confidence of being recognised by no one."

The sensations produced on an Englishman by returning to London after even a much shorter absence than that of Mr. Allen O'Donagough, are always powerful; and, if no particular circumstances exist to injure the effect, exceedingly delightful. The stupendous world it incloses, is sure to have spread farther and wider still, than when he left it. New displays of wealth—

new demonstrations of the power it brings—new proofs of that excess of civilisation, which, for lack of other work, turns the genius of man to the production of varieties in every article he uses, because improvement can go no farther. All this he is sure to see at every step he takes; and then the aspect of all those he meets, at once so familiar to his memory, yet personally so utterly unknown. The features, the complexion, the gait, bringing to his eye and his heart associations a thousand times more intimately belonging to him, notwithstanding the individual strangeness of each, than he could ever have felt in the foreign land whence he returned. Of all this Mr. Allen O'Donagough was fully conscious, and the excitement it produced was exceedingly agreeable.

As he walked farther and farther westward, these pleasant sensations multiplied; his heart swelled with a well-balanced mixture of national and individual triumph; and, notwithstanding all the awkward accidents of his past life, he would have been sorry to run the risk of changing conditions with any person he met. He knew he must have been a monstrously clever fellow, to be where and what he was at that moment; and he felt this with a very natural degree of satisfaction at the conviction. After all that had passed, the particulars of which, even to himself, he did not think it necessary to recapitulate—after all this, at the age of fifty-three, to find himself parading the streets of London, clear as a new-born babe from every taint of civil sin, and with his pockets full of cash, that no man could seize upon, and cry, "Rascal! that cash is mine!" was a degree of prosperity that might well make him feel some inches taller than usual as he walked.

It was by an impulse that had as much of instinct in it as will, that he at length found himself among the billiard-rooms of Leicester Square and its precincts. The unsightly Palais Royal of London surrounded him on all sides; and as he looked at its increased glow of gaslight, and breathed the queer mixture with which it has there pleased man to supply his lungs, in lieu of atmospheric air, he felt that he was once again AT HOME!

It would have required a much stronger effort than he conceived himself called upon to make, to avoid entering beneath one of the many roofs, which by night and day sheltered the devotees who pass their existence in making three little ivory balls run about and knock each other. He did enter; and mounting the stairs with a step as eager, though less active than heretofore, found himself, not without some emotion, on a spot where he had stood a thousand times before.

There were many persons in the room; but he looked round, and saw not one single face that he remembered, till the marker,

changing his place, displayed to him features, once as familiar to his eye as the dial on which he scored his games; but with an expression which, though not changed, was marked by lines so much stronger and deeper than heretofore, that the man looked like a caricature of his former self.

At first sight of him, Mr. Allen O'Donagough started, and felt half inclined to turn about, and make his exit before he had caught his eye. But his better judgment told him that by so doing he would lose an excellent opportunity of testing the effect of his altered appearance on an old acquaintance, and be forced to try it where it might perhaps be much more dangerous to fail. He therefore stood his ground; and when he perceived that the man's eye rested quietly and steadily on him, without the slightest indication of ever having examined his features before, his confidence increased sufficiently to lead him into conversation. The result was all that he desired; his observations were sufficiently scientific to merit even a marker's attention, and the man both looked at and listened to him, but still without betraying any trace of remembrance whatever. While suffering some little anxiety from his doubts how this experiment might answer, Mr. Allen O'Donagough probably forgot the great advantage (under existing circumstances) of fifteen years which had passed over his curls since he had last appeared before the eyes which so fortunately knew him not. Of all his advantages, perhaps this was the only one of which our *ci-devant* major was not fully sensible.

Nothing could exceed the lightness and gaiety of heart which ensued upon this successful experiment. He felt himself born again into the only world in which he wished to live; his outward skin, somewhat the worse for the wear, cast off, all his talents ripened, and his character and name without a stain!

There was one triumph more, a touch of which he was determined to enjoy without further delay. Mr. Allen O'Donagough had played billiards when he left England, but he played so much better now, that he could not but fancy his chance with the professional individual who had formerly been the object of his emulation and his envy, would be very different from what it was in days past. He accordingly engaged him as soon as the tables should be at leisure; and when the moment arrived, set about the game with almost as zealous a desire to win it, as if he had staked ten times the amount they were to play for.

The play of Mr. Allen O'Donagough was certainly improved; perhaps that of the marker was improved also; but neither the one nor the other had lost or forgotten any of those little peculiar touches of skill which distinguish one great billiard-man from another. The marker's eye had perused the

person and countenance of the new comer, something as an athlete of old might have done the conformation of one about to wrestle with him; and this survey had brought no single trait or movement to his mind, which suggested a suspicion that they had ever met before. No sooner, however, were the balls in full action, than a particular stroke, for which our major had been famous, awakened some long-forgotten manœuvrings in the marker's mind, and he suddenly turned round and directed a stare pregnant with inquiry into the stranger's face.

"Beg your pardon, sir; but may I ask your name?" said the man, with great civility.

"O'Donagough. What is your reason for asking?" was the reply. But as he made it, the colour mounted over the ample cheeks of the incognito, and he felt he had made a blunder.

"Only because that pretty hazard of yours put me so in mind of a chap that used to play here half a score years ago, or more, may be; and I don't remember to have seen exact the same stroke from any other man."

"Do you know this stroke?" demanded Mr. Allen O'Donagough, recovering himself, and performing a very skilful manœuvre that he had learned from a New Orleans man, with whom he had played at Sydney.

"No, sir! No, upon my soul! That is quite a foreign stroke, I take it,—you have played abroad, sir, I'll be bound."

"I learnt that at New Orleans," replied Mr. Allen O'Donagough.

"No wonder, sir, that you're a good player, then; for I have known New Orleans men as have beat us all hollow."

Mr. Allen O'Donagough won his game, and retired; having received a hint which he felt might be very useful to him. "Egad! I must shave my play, as well as my mustache, if I intend to remain incog," was the thought that passed through his head, as he gaily proceeded to reconnoitre, during another hour or so, the various alterations, additions, and improvements made during his absence throughout all the regions that he knew and loved the best. But like a prudent domestic man as he was, he returned soon after midnight to the Saracen's Head, having just done and seen enough to make him equally sanguine and impatient as regarded the variety of brilliant experiments which lay before him.

## CHAPTER X.

If the result of Mr. Allen O'Donagough's experiment upon the memory of the billiard-marker had been productive of satisfaction to himself, its consequences were more gratifying still to his lady. Little as he had said about it, his private intention had been to keep as much as possible out of the way of General Hubert, and all the brilliant set in which he presumed him to move, till he should be prepared to meet him advantageously.

The first step towards this was, the ascertaining that his own altered appearance was likely to prevent all danger of disagreeable reminiscences; the second must, of course, consist in preparations for assuming such an appearance and manner of life as might justify the ambitious hope of being received as a relation.

To this he attached quite as much importance as his wife, though he said much less about it, and was determined to hazard more, and run greater risks to obtain it, than it ever entered into her head to hope for.

Mr. Allen O'Donagough had ever been a man of spirit and enterprise; and having paid the penalty, almost inevitable in his line, upon indulging with too little caution in the display of his peculiar talents, he now determined, with ripened age, and ripened wisdom, to carry on business with that species of boldness and prudence united, which is only to be found in the very highest class of his profession. During many years of his residence in New South Wales, his purpose had been to make Paris the theatre of his future experiments; but he saw, or fancied he saw, in the remarkable accident which had brought him within reach of such persons as his wife claimed kindred with, the possibility of a career infinitely more distinguished than he had ever before ventured to hope for. There was considerable sagacity displayed in the reasoning by which he convinced himself that the very circumstances that seemed to render such hopes almost ridiculously audacious, would, in reality, make their attainment easy. Had General Hubert, and the wealthy and distinguished persons with whom he was connected, been less completely above all and everything with which Mr. Allen O'Donagough had mixed himself during his former life, there might, and must have been danger, notwithstanding his changed appearance, of such accidental allusions to past scenes, as it might have been very difficult to get over. But, as it was, nothing of the kind could be at all likely to occur; and having once made up his mind to hazard, as a necessary outlay, a considerable portion of the money he had contrived to make, he

became almost as impatient to open the campaign as Mrs. O'Donagough herself.

During the course of the following day much business was got through. By inquiries made according to Mrs. O'Donagough's suggestion in Berkeley-square, it was ascertained that General Hubert's family were at Brighton. By boldly parading through all the different haunts where formerly he was best known, Mr. O'Donagough found there was no danger whatever of his being recognised as the flash Major Allen, once so conspicuous among them. By the placing an English bank-note for twenty pounds in the hands of his wife, with a declaration that it was to be wholly expended in the decoration of herself and her daughter, he produced in the hearts of both a throb of pleasure which few things in this life can equal; and laid the foundation of two wardrobes, which were destined for years to be the admiration of many beholders. And, by placing himself in the hands of a first-rate German artist in St. James's-street, he was not only sure of coming forth from them as near in shape and air to the standard he desired to obtain, as it was possible for mortal shears to make him; but with as much safety as any precaution could insure of not permitting his person to be studied by any operator, who had ever enjoyed that advantage before.

In addition to all this, the active O'Donagough contrived, before the day was half over, to have himself and his appendages established in private lodgings in Hatton-garden, where, by the aid of a neighbouring ham-shop, and a little lodging-house cookery, they contrived to live for a week at very trifling expense.

But what a week of ecstasy it was! And how fully was it demonstrated in the case of Mrs. O'Donagough, that mind is omnipotent over matter! Few people enjoyed "*nice things*," as she was wont to call them; that is to say, such eating as particularly suited her fancy, with more keen relish than Mrs. O'Donagough; yet, during this week of strongly-excited sensibilities, although nothing of an edible nature was set before her that she could upon reflection approve, she scarcely uttered a murmur. Tough steaks, and greasy cutlets appeared, and were consumed almost without an observation; while the soaring spirit enjoyed a banquet in the contemplation of caps, bonnets, gowns, and mantles, not yet perceptible to the eye, perhaps, but of which the intellectual faculties were fully cognisant, which rendered all grosser gratifications contemptible.

"I do enjoy my porter, though!" uttered after the dismissal of a peculiarly unmanageable specimen of what is called animal food, was almost the only symptom betrayed by Mrs. O'Donagough of her being alive to anything of the kind.

At length,

Industrious man had done his part,

and industrious women also. "*The things*," were all sent home, and all that remained to be done before their places were taken for Brighton, was "to pack them up," as Patty said, "so that they might all come out, looking as lovely and beautiful as when they were put in."

"And where are we to leave all the rubbish we have brought over, Donny, while we make this delightful little trip?" inquired his lady.

Mr. O'Donagough had hired a garret in the house for the purpose—Mr. O'Donagough had secured three outside places by the earliest coach—Mr. O'Donagough had, with his own hands, brought home a little basket in which their necessary refreshments during the following day were to be deposited—in short, Mr. O'Danagough had forgotten nothing.

"Well now, everything seems smooth before us," said Mrs. O'Donagough, over their last Hatton-garden tea-table, "Oh! my darling Agnes! How I do long to get at her! By-the-by, Donny, I do think it was rather silly of you never to let me mention to her the time of our coming over. If I had, they would be expecting us, and I am not quite certain if I should not like that better than taking them by surprise."

"We have discussed that matter already, my dear," replied her peaceable husband. "My notion was, that it would be better to take them by surprise, and I think so still."

"Well! that's settled now, so there is no good in talking any more about it. But don't you think that if they were any of them to see Patty and me scrambling down from the top of the coach, they might think it did not look as if we were really people of fashion, as you have all along promised we should be?" said his wife.

Mr. Allen O'Donagough paused a little before he replied. This was one of the points upon which his system of tactics dictated very strong regulations, and though he was very sleepy, and much more inclined to dose than to talk, having secured himself from slipping off the horse-hair bottomed chair, by fixing his feet upon the mantelpiece, he roused himself sufficiently to express what he thought the occasion called for.

"As to that, my dear, and, indeed, as to all things of the same kind, it is quite necessary that you, and Patty too, should understand matters thoroughly at once. I *do* mean that we should appear like people of fashion—I am making immense sacrifices, and running enormous risks for this purpose; but it is altogether childish and silly to suppose that this can be done by people no richer than we are, without a vast deal of very

clever management. The real secret is, Mrs. O'Donagough, to keep all your contrivances out of sight; and if you can find out the way to do that, it don't signify a single straw what saving tricks you practise behind the scenes. As to my driving about the country like your fine cousins and nieces, and I don't know what all—it is perfect madness to dream of such a thing—I give you my honour that I should be in jail before I was six months older. But if we all carry on the war upon the same principle, setting our wits to work, one and all, to save money when nobody is looking at us, and to spend it in good style when they are, we may go on making an excellent appearance, and with no danger of getting into a scrape either. Do you understand what I mean, Patty?"

"Oh! dear yes, papa, I do indeed; and I think it is a very good way. I never do care how dirty or shabby my clothes are when I am out of sight, so that I can be smart when I go out to be seen," was the young lady's reply.

"Kiss me, darling!" said the delighted father, who was really becoming more fond of her every day; "that is exactly the principle on which we must all act; and I hope, Mrs. O'D., that you intend to be as reasonable about it as your daughter?"

"Let me alone for that sort of thing, O'Donagough. I don't believe that there is a woman in the world who would be more capable of sacrificing everything to the making a good appearance, than I should. I was always brought up from my earliest infancy to think a great deal of it. My poor, dear mother, I am sure, never thought of anything else, and I should be sorry if my daughter did not come after me with the same right feelings. All that is to be said, therefore, about this going outside, is just that we must take care not to be seen or known."

"That is quite right, my dear, and speaking like yourself. This time, of course, there can be no danger, as nobody that you ever saw in your life before would be likely to find you out on the top of the Brighton coach. However, as a general rule, it may be well to remember, that on all such occasions, the best and safest way is to make yourself look as little like what you are as possible. So that instead of being rather better dressed than the rest of the company on the top of a coach, people that understand the sort of thing that we have in view would take care to be the worst. For just observe: now, supposing we sat opposite to some sharp-sighted body, who, having scoured us from hat to shoe, should make up his wise noddle to believe that we were tallow-chandlers, taking our daughter from the melting to get a puff of sea-air. Well, suppose that same person saw us afterwards, in the very best and grandest society, would he not be ten times less likely to know us in our fine

traps, than if we had worn something in the same shape and fashion when he met us on the coach?"

"That's very true, my dear," said Mrs. O'Donagough, "and late as it is, I think I shall take the hint, and make some little alteration in what I was going to wear. You understand the sort of thing, Patty, that your papa means, don't you, my dear?"

"Yes, to be sure I do, and you shall see if I can't make a good sight of myself!" replied Miss Patty, starting away from the tea-table; and seizing upon one of the bonnets that lay on the top of a trunk ready for the morrow, she began to take out pins, and demolish bows at a great rate.

"My dear child, what are you about?" cried her mother; "you ain't going to waste all that good ribbon, I hope?"

"Waste it! How can you talk such nonsense, mamma, as if that was what papa wanted? No, I won't waste it, but do just look here; don't I look like a vulgar dowdy?"

"Well, to be sure, fine feathers do make fine birds, there is no denying it," said Mrs. O'Donagough, looking with some mixture of vexation at Martha's very successful attempt to make herself look a vulgar dowdy.

"Capital, girl!" cried her father, chuckling. "She is up to everything."

At an early hour the next morning, the active, enterprising, hopeful trio, were making as much noise in their sitting-room as if a dozen ordinary persons were about to take their departure from it.

"Pray, pray don't set that box up on end! It has got both our best bonnets in it!" cried the elderly lady.

"Oh, my! that's all the artificial flowers for mamma and me!" screamed the young one, fiercely extricating a deal case from the hands of the maid, who was irreverently jerking it out the way.

"Make the tea, can't you?" bawled Mr. O'Donagough to his wife. "The branch coach will be here in a minute, and I positively will not stir an inch till I have had my breakfast."

At length, however, they were snugly accommodated; father, mother, daughter, packages, and all; not only on the branch coach, but on the very vehicle itself that was to convey them to the goal of their wishes. But this was not effected without some difficulty. Mrs. O'Donagough was large, and none of her adventures had hitherto accustomed her to such a degree of activity as was necessary to bring her to the place she was to occupy, so that the assistance of a man putting the last touch to the luggage on the roof, as well as that of Mr. O'Donagough, who was stationed below, was required to aid the operation. The young lady had skipped up with great agility, the

moment her father indicated to her the place where she was to sit; and while her mamma was mounting, she stood up, clapping her hands, and shouting with laughter, as she watched the difficult process. After this first impediment to their setting off had been overcome, however, nothing could be more prosperous or satisfactory than their journey; the whole family, each in their respective style, ably sustained the incognito which had been enjoined. Mr. O'Donagough, during the entire distance, preserved total silence. Mrs. O'Donagough talked a good deal, it being an exercise to which she was too much accustomed, to leave it off without great inconvenience; but she so cautiously avoided every allusion to her own dignity, and so steadily abstained from addressing either of her companions by name, that a young Sussex farmer, who was the person to whom she chiefly addressed herself, would have been a very clever fellow, indeed, had her conversation left information of any kind upon his mind. Miss O'Donagough as steadily kept in view the part she had to perform, as either father or mother; but this did not prevent her from looking pretty constantly in the face of the young farmer, thinking, however, all the time, how very much handsomer her dear Jack was.

According to his usual system, Mr. O'Donagough, while appearing to consult his wife on many points with the most amiable conjugal confidence, had hitherto uttered nothing definitive respecting his projects on arriving at Brighton; and in this he acted wisely, as before he could be said to know what he intended himself, he had one or two little experiments to make, and one or two questions to ask.

The first words he had been heard to utter since he placed himself beside his daughter, on the top of the vehicle, were spoken to that young lady as soon as herself and her ponderous mamma were once more safely lodged on the pavement, and they ran thus, as he eyed the waiter, who came forth from the hotel at which the coach stopped:

"I suppose the thing you would like best to do just at present, would be to eat, wouldn't it?"

"Well done you for a good guess, papa!" replied Miss Patty, in high glee, "and you couldn't be more right if I had been a glass case, and you had seen through me. 'Tis good news hearing that word, isn't it, mamma?"

"Indeed it is, Patty," replied Mrs. O'Donagough; "I feel perfectly sinking and exhausted. It is no joke, travelling from London to Brighton, with nothing on earth to keep soul and body together, but a miserable dry sandwich of salt ham."

"Come, come, let's have no grumbling!" cried Mr. O'Donagough, turning sharply round from the waiter to whom he had been giving his orders. "If you will follow this person

up stairs, he will show you into a sitting-room, while I see after all your multitude of boxes."

"Grumbling!" muttered Mrs. O'Donagough, in reply, "I should like to know where the most grumbling comes from?" But perceiving her husband to be no longer within hearing, she peaceably followed the waiter into the room to which he led them, and only indulged herself by saying, as he opened or shut the window—drew the blinds up or drew them down—or employed himself on some other of the numerous assiduities which denote the presence of a waiter, "Let everything in the way of refreshment which the gentleman has ordered be of the very best that the place can furnish; and let it all be brought with as little delay as possible—that is, I mean to say, instantly."

"Why, mamma!" cried Miss Patty, who the instant the waiter had quitted the window, flew to throw it open as widely as the sash would permit, "this place is more lovely, ten times over, than even London itself! My! what a sight of beautiful full-dressed gentlemen I do see crossing along at the bottom of the street! And such bonnets! I shall grow wild, I can tell you that, if I am kept in long, either for eating, or drinking, or anything else. Why there's officers by dozens, mamma! Oh! my goodness! what a delightful place!"

Her indulgent mother did not long delay to station her own ample person beside the juvenile form of her delighted daughter; and so much was there within reach of their eager eyes, as they fearlessly thrust forward their heads and shoulders to obtain a view of the point where the street opened upon the Marine-parade, that, hungry as they were, the cold meat and porter arrived before they had more than once turned round their heads to look for them.

Mr. O'Donagough entered in the wake of the tray, and for some reason or other seemed in high good-humour. "Come along, both of ye!" he exclaimed, gaily. "The deuce is in it if you are not ready. 'Tis wonderful how quickly the sea air gets hold of one." And then seating himself before a prodigious mass of cold beef, he began to handle the cutlass-like weapon which was placed beside it, with such skilful zeal, that his fair companions seemed to forget for a while all earthly blessings, save such as he heaped upon the plates before them.

"And what do you think of Brighton, Miss Patty?" said he, as distinctly as his occupation would allow.

"It is a beautiful divine glory of a place, papa!" replied Patty; "and I am sure I shall like it a monstrous deal better than London."

"It really does seem an enchanting spot, Donny," said his wife, setting down an empty beer-glass, of majestic size; "and if things go on well here, about the Huberts, and everything

else, you know, I do hope and trust you will give us a decent lodging, and let us enjoy ourselves."

"I shall be able to tell you more about it, my dear, an hour hence," replied Mr. Allen O'Donagough, continuing to carve and to eat with a degree of celerity that not only showed his seaward appetite, but proved his time to be precious. "As soon as you have done eating, you must go into the room where I have had all the luggage stowed, and let us see what's what a little. You must unpack right away the trunk that has the things which came from the tailor's for me—and Patty, when you have done cramming, I'll get you to look out my shaving tackle; I shall want the key of the hat-box too. Come along, both of ye, there's good girls."

"Lor, papa! Do stop a moment. You never do care for tarts, like mamma and me. 'Tisn't fair to take us away in the very midst of our treat," said Patty, making, however, no unnecessary delay as she spoke.

"You must stop a little, if you please," added his wife, in like manner continuing her employment, with all possible activity. "'Tis such abominable extravagance to pay for things and not eat them."

Mr. Allen O'Donagough listened to reason, and continued to amuse himself with a crust of bread and cheese, till the last tartlet disappeared, when starting up he exclaimed, "Now for it, then—I want to be stirring, I promise you!"

"But to be sure you are not going to dress yourself in new clothes before you go out to look for lodgings, Mr. O'Donagough, are you? Patty and I must go as we are, I can tell you that," said Mrs. O'Donagough.

"I declare I will do no such thing, mamma!" cried the young lady, bursting into open rebellion; "I would no more go out and meet all those beautiful officers in that horrid bonnet and shawl, than I'd fly. I would rather be whipped a great deal."

"Nonsense, Patty!" replied her mother. "It is much better to do that, I can tell you, than to begin the thing half-and-half. You may be quite sure, my dear, that there is not one of them will know you again when they see you in your pink satin bonnet, and your beautiful pink scarf."

"Don't trouble yourselves to squabble any more about it, for you are not to go out with me at present, let your dress be what it may," said the gentleman.

"Not go out with you, O'Donagough?" exclaimed his wife, with equal disappointment and surprise. "Why, you don't mean to take lodgings for us, without ever letting me see them?"

"No, my dear, of course, not for my eyes! I am not going to take lodgings, Mrs. O'Donagough, but only just to take a look

at the place, and judge whether our taking lodgings here at all would be likely to answer or not."

Mrs. O'Donagough understood her husband's voice, and knew that he most certainly would go out alone. So, without further opposition, she prepared to obey his behests, and having done her part in finding the various articles he wanted, left the room followed by her daughter, without making any further observations on his mode of proceeding. But though she made the chamber-door in some degree slam after her, the sitting-room window soon restored her good humour, and she and her daughter continued to recreate themselves by gazing through it, at all things within reach of their eyes, wholly insensible to the progress of time.

How long they had remained thus pleasantly engaged they would have been at a loss to say, when at length their attention was drawn from without, by opening of the door behind them. They both turned their heads at the same moment, and saw a gentleman enter the room, whom, at the first glance, neither of them recognised—yet, nevertheless, it was no other than Mr. O'Donagough himself. He was dressed very handsomely in a suit, which, though not exactly mourning, and not exactly clerical, might, at the first glance, have been mistaken for either. But the circumstance which, though seemingly trifling, made the change in his general appearance the most remarkable, was his having substituted a white muslin cravat, without any shirt-collar being visible, for his usual black stock, above which was wont to arise two well-stiffened ears, of dimensions considerably larger than common. This, and the metamorphosis his hair had undergone, which, when he left the room had been "sable silvered," but when he re-entered, it presented a wavy, yet closely-fitted outline of locks, nearly flaxen, made him look so totally unlike himself, that when at length his wife and daughter became aware of his identity, they both burst into violent laughter.

"What on earth, O'Donagough, have you been doing to yourself?" cried his wife, as soon as she recovered the power of speaking. "You look fifty times more like a methodist parson than anything else. Your coat, and all that, is very new, and very nice, certainly; but I can't say I approve the change at all. What with your shaving, and all the rest, you have altogether lost the look of a man of fashion, which I used to admire so much in you."

Mr. O'Donagough looked steadily in his wife's face, for half a moment, and then said very gravely, "I am not so young as I have been, my dear, any more than yourself; and I am inclined to think now, that a respectable appearance is more to be desired than a dashing one."

The steady look was not removed for another half-moment after he had finished speaking, and when it was, his wife had not only ceased to laugh, but said in accents quite as demure as his own, "I am sure I am quite of the same opinion, Mr. O'Donagough. When one is going to mix with families of distinction, there is nothing so important as an air of dignity and—and—of superior style and character, and all that sort of thing. You look very nice indeed, Mr. O'Donagough, and I promise you I, for one, shall be exceedingly angry with Patty, if ever she gives a look, or says a word, or giggles and titters, or gives any sign whatever, of your appearing different from what you used to do."

"You may depend upon it, my dear, Patty knows a great deal better than to do anything half so vulgar and silly. She certainly knows very little about most things as yet; but she is not such a fool either as to laugh at her own father, or try to make other people laugh at him on account of his dress or anything else. If I am laughed at, she will be quite sure that no very great notice will be taken of her."

"You need not be afraid of me," said Patty, turning again to the window. "Papa knows how to take care of himself, and what will go down best with the grandee cousins you talk so much about, there's no doubt about that; and so he don't take it into his head that I ought to look like an old quiz too, I shall say nothing to nobody about him."

"That's a first-rate girl, Mrs. O'D.; and if fair play is given her, I'll lay my life on it, she will make her fortune," said the well-satisfied father.

"It is not the first time *that* has been said of her, my dear," replied his wife, with a nod of the head that meant a great deal. "It is not a little that will content me for her, I promise you. But get along, Donny, don't waste any more time talking—I shall be dying to see you back again, and know something about what's to become of us next."

Mr. O'Donagough obeyed her, but said nothing; and his wife being rather tired of standing, drew a chair to the window, and seating herself beside the still unwearied Patty, beguiled the time by teaching her how to know colonels, majors, captains, and lieutenants, by their uniforms.

Mr. O'Donagough meanwhile, with a hat of rather larger dimensions than was at that time usual, and a stout elderly-looking walking-stick, sallied forth to perambulate the streets of Brighton, for the first time for rather more than fifteen years. Had he, however, been a greater stranger there still, he might have taken less pains in preparing for this expedition. But the time had been when few places knew him better; and before he could conscientiously feel himself justified in indulging the wife

of his bosom by once more taking up his quarters there, he deemed it necessary to ascertain how lasting might be the impression he had left on the minds of the permanent inhabitants. Here, too, as in the familiar purlieus of Leicester-square, there were haunts over the nature and destination of which, time seemed to have no power. Where billiard-balls rolled in days of yore, he found them rolling still; the same sights, and the same sounds, greeted him in the self-same places; and so little changed was the aspect of these minor features, that till he looked more widely round him, and perceived that unless brick and mortar had obeyed the commands of some enchanted lamp, years must indeed have passed since last he stood there, he could almost have fancied that he had pocketed his last Brighton winnings but yesterday.

Though very far, in general, from being the plaything of his own imagination, Mr. Allen O'Donagough stood hesitating for a moment, whether or not he should enter a certain doorway, leading to what he remembered to have been the most approved rendezvous for gentlemen of his own class, when Brighton was one of his many homes. It was not because he feared the keen eye of a marker—when much less carefully equipped for such an encounter, he had stood this test triumphantly (despite even his "*pretty hazard*"). But fifteen years before, there dwelt in that dusky mansion, a pair of the very brightest eyes that had ever looked upon him. The light young figure too, and the gay ready smile of her to whom they belonged, were as fresh in his memory as if he had left these also but yesterday. He had made this reckless, thoughtless thing believe he loved her; and in return, she had given but too certain proof that she loved him. The house before which he stood had been her father's. Did she dwell there still? And would she know him?

These were the questions which caused the middle-aged, respectable-looking, Mr. Allen O'Donagough to pause and hesitate before a door, which he ought to have entered quickly, or have passed with scorn. He felt that he might be exposing himself needlessly to a great risk, but yet the trial might be worth making, for, if successful, he conceived it impossible he could ever be tormented by such doubts and fears again.

This consideration at length nerved him to the enterprise, and he went in. There was the same scent of ill-extinguished lamps as he advanced, and as it seemed, the identical much-worn oil-cloth under his feet; there was, too, within a glass inclosure at the foot of the staircase, a gaily dressed female. It was there, exactly there, that his bright-eyed Susan used to sit; it was there he had seen her for the first time; and there, little as she guessed it at the moment, and little, perhaps, as he himself

intended it should be so, he had looked upon her the last. He now stared at the stout, gaudily-decked woman before him, and though feeling something, perhaps, a little akin to disappointment, it was a relief to know that there was not any danger to be run from deep impressions on poor Susan's memory.

"They are playing up stairs as usual, I suppose?" said he, stopping before the open window-frame, at which sat the capacious barmaid.

The woman started, and looked up, but as soon as her eyes encountered the respectable figure of Mr. O'Donagough, she looked down again upon the page on which she was writing, and quietly replied, "Yes, sir."

That glance, however, which had sufficed to deceive her, had undeceived him. They were Susan's eyes, and none other, that had looked upon him; and though girlish delicacy of every kind was sadly merged, and lost in most coarse womanhood, he felt perfectly sure of the identity.

"Is the room crowded, ma'am?" he resumed, willing again to see those beautiful eyes, so altered, yet the same.

Again the woman started, and before she answered drew aside a curtain that obscured the light of the window behind her, when the last light of the setting sun fell full upon his face. But this, instead of producing danger, most effectually saved him from it; the Susan of former days again looked steadily at him for a moment, and then slightly smiling, probably at the suspicion to which his voice had given birth, she replied, "Upon my word, sir, I don't know."

As if affronted by the abruptness of the reply, he turned suddenly away, and walked out.

"She does not know me," he murmured as he went; "and if she does not, no one will."

There was, perhaps, one little grain of mortification, mixed in the full bushel of satisfaction produced by this experiment; but if so, our adventurer was too wise a man to sift for it. With an alert and active step he repaired to the more fashionable part of the gay town, and within a little more than one hour of the time he had left them, Mr. O'Donagough returned to his family with the agreeable intelligence that he had seen some very handsome apartments on the Marine Parade, and that they might take possession of them immediately, if they approved of them.

## CHAPTER XI.

A DOMESTIC-LOOKING party, consisting of a very lovely young woman and two children, with another lady, who might, perhaps, be their governess, were seated upon one of the rare masses of stone, which, in default of better, are at Brighton called rocks; when the occupation of each was suspended by the approach of a gentleman, who had just descended a flight of steps, leading down the cliff. The lovely lady ceased to converse with the more homely one, who sat beside her; the youngest child suffered a whole frock-load of marine-treasures to fall again amidst the shingles, whence she had culled them, while she darted forward to greet the intruder; and the elder one, who was too tall to be called a little girl, and too slight and juvenile in appearance to be classed as a great one, shut up the book she was reading, and joyously exclaimed, "Papa!"

"How very cool and comfortable you all look here!" said General Hubert—for he it was who drew near; "and how extremely skilful you have been in finding out the only 'coigne of vantage' that could produce sufficient shade to shelter you!"

"And it produces sufficient to shade you too, Montague," said his wife, making room for him between herself and her companion. "I am so glad you are come before the East-Indiaman is out of sight! Did you ever see a more stately creature? How beautifully one-half of her canvas catches the sunshine, while the remainder is as dark as night from that little black canopy of a cloud that so mysteriously hovers over her! This is certainly the most beautiful day for lights and shades that we have had yet."

"Oh, my poor Agnes!" said the general, heaving a deep sigh, but with so comic an expression of countenance as only to make his wife smile.

"What means that tender sigh, my dear?" said she, looking at him with an evident expectation of hearing something that would amuse her. But General Hubert shook his head, and replied in a voice at least half serious,—

"I am very much afraid, dearest, that I bring news which will vex you."

"What do you mean, Hubert?" cried Agnes, a little impatiently; "it cannot be anything the matter about the boys, or you would not look so half-disposed to jest as you do."

"Probably not, Agnes. No, dearest, I have heard nothing about the boys. But—"

And here he stopped, turning his eyes at the same time upon the two little girls, and then with a smile upon their

governess. This lady returning the smile, rose instantly, and, stretching out a hand to either pupil, said, "This is lazy work, young ladies; remember, we have had no walk yet."

The children, or at any rate, the elder one, looked a little inclined to linger and hear what papa was going to say; but the habit of obedience seemed too strong to be broken, and after one short questioning look that received no encouragement, she accepted the offered hand and the trio set off together, leaving Mrs. Hubert waiting for the disclosure which her husband was evidently come on purpose to make, with a curiosity that seemed to increase in exact proportion to its delay.

"I do not like sending that dear, excellent Miss Wilmot off so cavalierly," said the general, watching the retreating party; "nevertheless, I am much obliged to her for understanding my look so readily; for I should scarcely like to trust to your philosophy, Agnes, the reception of the news I bring while Elizabeth was here."

"But nobody is here now, my dear general!" she replied; "and I implore you to tell me instantly what this terrible news is."

The general put his hand into his waistcoat-pocket and drew forth from it two visiting-cards, and a three-cornered note. Agnes stretched forth her hand—received them—and read aloud—

"MRS. A. O'DONAGOUGH.
"MISS O'DONAGOUGH.
*East Cliff.*"

and again on the other card—

"MR. A. O'DONAGOUGH.
*East Cliff.*"

"Montague! Are you jesting with me?" were the first words uttered by Agnes after reading these most unexpected names.

"No, truly am I not, Agnes," he replied. "I took these cards and the note you hold in your hand, which was left with them, from the hall-table as I entered the house ten minutes ago; and, guessing whereabouts I should find you, set off again instantly to impart the news they convey. But do not look so really and truly frightened, Agnes! Aunt Barnaby is Aunt Barnaby no longer."

Agnes shook her head: "Ah! Hubert, you know better than that!

A rose by any other name—

my dear, dear husband! How will you be able to bear it?"

"You shall see, Agnes; things are most delightfully changed with me, dear love, since the days you seem to remember so

distinctly when the Barnaby, I will not deny it, had power very considerably to shake my nerves. But pray read your note: I am a little curious, I own, to see how she introduces herself."

Mrs. Hubert opened the note, and read aloud as follows:—

"You will easily believe, my beloved Agnes, that amidst all the delightful feelings produced by returning to my native country, the hope of once more pressing you to my heart predominates. Gracious Heaven, what a moment it will be for me when I present to you my darling child, and when I receive yours in my arms! When may this be, my dearest niece? Of course, neither Mr. O'Donagough, or myself, or our sweet girl, have any engagements that would interfere for a moment with our ardent wish of seeing you and yours. I shall wait with the greatest impatience till I hear from you, and trust that you will fix no very distant hour, my beloved Agnes, for our meeting. Mr. O'Donagough charges me to present his respectful compliments to General Hubert; and Martha, whose young eyes beam with affection whenever your names are mentioned, murmurs gently in my ear, 'Send my kind love, mamma, to all my dear young cousins.' For some few lingering hours, then, adieu, my dear sister's own daughter! and believe me ever your devotedly attached aunt,

"MARTHA COMPTON O'DONAGOUGH."

Having finished this epistle, Mrs. Hubert put it into the hands of her husband, as if it were impossible that he could have fully received all its terrible meaning from her delivery of it. As she did this, the expression of her fair face was so deplorably tragical, and so humbly deprecative, that the general, though somewhat chagrined himself at this unexpected announcement, could not retain his gravity, but laughed aloud.

"And you make a jest of it, Montague!" she exclaimed; "is that laugh genuine? or is it only feigned, to prevent my perceiving how deeply annoyed you are?"

"Not feigned, upon my word and honour, Agnes. Nor do I believe that Aunt Betsy herself, though generally grave enough upon the subject of Mrs. Barnaby, could refrain from joining me were she here, to see your piteous countenance. How can you be so foolish, my dear wife? How can the elder lady, or her young daughter, or her very reverend husband, possess any real power over our happiness now? Send her word, dear, that you will call upon her at two o'clock to-morrow; I will not let you go to-day, for you look fit for nothing but a gallop over the downs. Come along, Agnes, I'll have the horses out directly."

The gloom which had rested on her beautiful countenance,

was chased by a smile as bright and sudden in its influence, as the sunbeams whose effects she had just been studying.

"Oh, my dear husband, how I do love you!" said she, gaily taking his arm, and moving towards the stairs in the cliff with a step that seemed in unison with the recovered lightness of her heart. "I hope you do not think my dismay at receiving this unexpected news arises from my own personal distaste to Aunt Barnaby's society? I do assure you, that were it not for the dread I feel lest you should be annoyed by her, somewhat in the same style as I have witnessed formerly, I should not feel the slightest displeasure at it. Perhaps, even, I might be almost able to persuade myself that I should like to see her. Her little girl I really do wish very much to see. She must be within a few months of the same age as Elizabeth, and notwithstanding all my greatness, Hubert, as your honoured wife, I have no inclination to forget how nearly they are related."

"No more have I, sweet Agnes; and it was precisely for that reason, I gave the look to Miss Wilmot, which made her lead away the children. I suspected that you would betray a little more wonder, and a little less joy, on first receiving the intelligence, than might be easily forgotten. This would have been unfair. I should not particularly wish Elizabeth to make Mrs. A. O'Donagough her model; but I see no reason why a little girl of her own age, who must have been brought up simply at least, and without any great pretension, in the remote shades of New South Wales, should not obtain such a share of her love and good graces, as her near relationship gives her a right to expect. So torment yourself no more, Agnes, about my miseries on the subject. I could feel well inclined to laugh at the vehemence of my own feelings, in days of yore, on the subject of this poor lady, and do not, I assure you, anticipate the least danger of a relapse."

"I often think, Montague," she replied, "that you have some mystical mode of reading my heart. It so perpetually happens, that you do and say exactly the things I most wish, even when circumstances would lead me to expect something different. But shall I confess that I now feel perfectly ashamed of myself from the excess of vexation this three-cornered epistle caused me? solely, I believe, from its expressions of familiar affection. I was foolish enough to think, Hubert, that you would not like your daughter to be claimed as a relative by this obscure young cousin."

"Why, considering, Agnes, how many superlatively fine relations you have done my daughter the honour of giving her —Nesbitts and Stephensons without end—I really think it would be unreasonable to complain of her being claimed as kindred by one humble lassie who has neither learned her steps

from a French opera-dancer, nor her singing from an Italian opera-singer. I am by no means certain that our simple Elizabeth may not like her best."

This conversation brought them to their own door; on reaching which a servant was despatched to the stables to order their horses, and while they were waited for, Mrs. Hubert, after a little further consultation with her husband, wrote the following note:—

"My dear Aunt,

"Accept my best congratulations upon your return to England after an absence of so many years, and let me fix two o'clock to-morrow for repeating these congratulations in person. I feel quite anxious to see my young cousin, who must be, if I mistake not, about the same age as my eldest girl. I hope they will be good friends and playfellows.

"General Hubert begs to join his request to mine, that Mr. O'Donagough, yourself, and Martha, would give us the pleasure of your company at dinner on Thursday at six o'clock.

"Believe me, my dear Aunt,

"Your affectionate niece,

"AGNES HUBERT."

This note approved and despatched, Mrs. Hubert, with a lightened spirit, mounted her beautiful mare, and galloped for a couple of hours over the Sussex downs with as much enjoyment as if "Aunt Barnaby" had not been in existence.

Her note reached its destination safely, and was received by the whole of the O'Donagough family in council. Mr. O'Donagough, though not exactly confessing that he remained at home on purpose, contrived to be in the drawing-room when the servant of the house entered with it; and Martha, who, from the reiterated harangues of her mamma on the subject, had conceived a very distinct idea, that most of her pleasures, and all her consequence, depended on the manner in which "the Huberts" received them, no sooner saw a smart footman, bearing a note in his hand, ring at the bell, than springing back from the station she constantly occupied at the window, she exclaimed, "Here it comes, mamma!—such a footman!—all over silver lace! I'll bet a dollar it is to ask us to come and drink tea with them."

"Be quiet, Martha! Don't scream so loud," said Mr. O'Donagough.

"Oh! how my poor heart beats!" cried his wife, forcibly compressing that part of her person wherein it was lodged. "Dearest—" Agnes! she would have added, but a feeling of doubt and caution checked her, and compressing her lips, and

assuming an air of dignified composure, she suddenly resolved to express no further affection for Mrs. General Hubert till it was ascertained how she was likely to be welcomed in return.

The lively Martha gave a prodigious jump the instant the drawing-room door opened, and clutched the important note from the maid-servant's hand.

"Now, who'll know the news first, I wonder?" she cried, triumphantly holding her prize above her head.

"How dare you behave so, Martha!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, hastily rising, and approaching her daughter in a manner that made it evident there would be a battle for the note, if the young lady yielded it not unresistingly. But the matter was immediately decided by the authoritative voice of Mr. O'Donagough himself, who, with more anxiety than he intended should appear, sat picking his teeth, and pretending to read a newspaper.

"No nonsense, if you please, Miss Patty! Give your mother the note INSTANTLY." And instantly the note trembled beneath the agitated fingers of Mrs. O'Donagough.

"—Best congratulation!—anxious to see young cousin!—good friends!—General Hubert!—dinner on Thursday!—Oh! my dear Agnes!—my darling, darling niece!" she exclaimed, falling back in her chair in very violent emotion. "How I dote upon her! Was there ever anything so sweet, O'Donagough?"

This demand was addressed to her husband, in consequence of his having caught the note as it fell from her hands as she clasped them in ecstasy after the hasty perusal of it. "What a fool I have been," she continued, with something between a sob and a laugh, "to let all your nonsensical doubts bother me as they have done! Nobody, of course, but myself can possibly know what Agnes and I have been to each other! Let me have the note again Donny!—dear darling creature! How touching—how sweet her language is! I am sure you will dote upon her, O'Donagough; and remember, my dear, that all she is, she owes to me. I formed her mind and manners; and I think when you know her better, you will confess that she does me no discredit."

"Dear me, papa," cried the young lady, "how you do spell it and spell it! Isn't it my turn now, mamma? She's my cousin, papa, more than she is yours, you know."

"The lady is my niece, Patty, and not my cousin," replied her father, passing his hand across the lower port of his face to conceal a smile, arising probably from a greater variety of incongruous and amusing recollections than either of his companions could understand. "The note," he added, "is a very agreeable note as far as it goes—and I presume you have

no engagement, Mrs. O'Donagough, that will prevent our having the pleasure of dining with General Hubert on Thursday next?"

"I rather think not," she answered, in the same tone of comic gravity. "Nor do I intend to be from home at two o'clock to-morrow?"

"Mayn't I see the note, mamma?" cried Patty, almost whimpering. "I do think it is the hardest thing that ever was, you two keeping it all to yourselves, and making your jokes about it, and I standing by as if I was a baby all the time."

"Give her the note, dear Donny," said Mrs. O'Donagough; "I don't wonder that she is longing for it. There, miss! read that, and rejoice—though you can't know yet one-half a quarter of the difference it may make to you."

Miss O'Donagough received the precious paper from her father, and depositing herself with a good deal of vehemence in the corner of a sofa (for her temper had been chafed by the delay) began to study it. Though not testifying equal ecstasy to her mother, she perused the first few lines with a well-satisfied air; and when she came to the phrase, "I feel quite anxious to see my young cousin," she looked up with a smile, and gave a sidelong nod with her head that seemed to say, "I count for something in the business, at any rate." But when again throwing her eyes upon the note, she read the words, "I hope they will be good friends and playfellows," her colour arose to crimson, and mounted to her very eyes. For a moment she swelled in silence, and then, recovering breath, exclaimed—

"Your cousin, or niece, or whatever she is, may be as great and as grand as she will—but she is a born fool, and I know I shall hate her."

"Hoity, toity! Miss Patty. Pray what is the matter now?" inquired her mother, with very sincere astonishment.

"Matter, indeed! I wonder, ma'am, that you can bear to have me treated in such a way. What does she mean by saying that her girl and me may be playfellows? A precious girl she must be, too, if she *is* as old as me, for her mother to talk in that way, as if she was an idiot, or a baby."

"It is no good for you to fluster yourself in that way, Patty, about nothing at all," replied Mrs. O'Donagough. "There are very few English girls, you must remember, as tall and womanly as you, at fourteen. And another thing is, I can tell you, that it is not every mother that chooses to bring her daughter forward as I do. Most ladies, indeed, keep their girls back as much as possible."

"What, the old ladies are jealous of 'em, I suppose," replied Patty, with an expressive toss of the head. "Nasty, un-

natural, old beasts! I tell you, I know I shall hate this good-for-nothing old woman, who tries to make believe that her daughter is a baby, to make herself seem young. It's downright horrid, isn't it, papa?"

"I tell you what, Patty," replied her father, laughing; "if all girls were like you, the mothers would find it pretty hard work to keep 'em back, I fancy. However, you had better not put yourself in a passion about nothing. Perhaps your grandee cousin is *not* so old as you are—and her mother may have forgot all about your age, I dare say."

"Elizabeth Hubert is exactly five months younger than Patty," observed Mrs. O'Donagough; "but it is like enough she may be a peaking little girl. Agnes was but a poor thread of a thing when she married."

"I don't care the split of a straw what she is," returned her daughter. "Old or young, little or big, it's all one to me—only I wouldn't advise 'em to set me to be her playfellow, as she calls it—I'll teach her queer plays, if she does, I can tell her."

This little puff of disagreeable excitement blown away—a process greatly facilitated by Mrs. O'Donagough's judiciously alluding to the dresses it would be necessary to prepare for Thursday—nothing could be more agreeable than the strain of prophecy into which the conversation fell. All the sanguine hopes and expectations of the parents respecting the numerous advantages they contemplated from an intercourse so auspiciously begun were freely expressed before their child, who fully proved, by several intelligent remarks, that she was as competent to understand the subject as either of them. One observation alone was muttered with conjugal mystery by Mrs. O'Donagough, into the ear of her husband; and it ran thus:—

"Do you feel any misgivings, Donny, about the sharp eyes of Agnes?" To which he most satisfactorily replied by snapping his fingers with such vivacity, as to produce a sound clear as a castanet; while at the same time he returned the mutter, by pronouncing the single word, "Stuff!"

Though the toilet of the following morning did not, as Mrs. O'Donagough observed, signify a cent in comparison of that to be worn at the dinner-party, still it was not altogether neglected. At about twenty minutes before two, they all three met in the drawing-room, with eyes that seemed to challenge the examination and judgment of each other.

The first expression of applause was elicited by the smooth precision of Mr. O'Donagough's new wig; the full value of which his wife seemed to feel at that moment for the first time. "It's quite perfect, Donny," said she, "I never saw anything equal to it in all my life. Why, your own mother—I mean

that you look very nice and respectable indeed, and I like and approve it very much, Mr. O'Donagough;"—which name, with the emphasis she then gave it, as fully explained to her husband all that was passing in her mind, as if she had discoursed upon it for an hour.

He gave her a nod to show that she was understood, and then a second nod to himself, as he looked in the glass and felt conscious how perfectly well he deserved her approbation both expressed and implied.

The appearance of Patty was the next object of attention; and on this subject Mr. O'Donagough was eloquent, cordially returning the admiration he had received.

"I hope you are contented with the looks of your girl, Mrs. O'D.?" said he. "There is no denying, ladies, that you know how to spend your money. What is this beautiful-looking stuff that her gown is made off?—Is it satin?"

"No, my dear," replied his wife; "it certainly is not satin. Twenty pounds between us, though a very pretty present, would not give us morning gowns made of satin. But it is a very beautiful manufacture, Donny, which I like exceedingly, it takes the colour so bright. It is nothing in the world but cotton, with just a few threads of silk, you see, run up and down, to catch the eye. But if it was the richest satin ever made, the colour could not be more beautifully brilliant. Darling!—She looks like a full-blown jonquil, doesn't she, my dear?"

"She looks like an uncommon fine girl," replied Mr. O'Donagough. "Here eyes are like stars—I never saw them look so bright before—and her fine long dark curls are as handsome as your own used to be, my dear, when I first met you at————. The first time I saw you, I mean."

"You are quite right, my love, excepting that her hair curls naturally, it is exactly like mine—and I must say she does look very handsome to-day."

"Egad!" resumed the father, "I don't know what you have done to her; her complexion looks so beautiful—to be sure you have not—" and here he imitated, with his hand applied to his face, the delicate action employed to rouge a a lady's cheek. "You must not do that, my dear. It is all very well, and very becoming at about twice her age—but she don't want it yet."

Mrs. O'Donagough said nothing in reply, but employed herself in settling the collar of her own embroidery that finished the dress of her daughter—while Patty turned aside her head and laughed.

"But you say nothing about *me*, my dear," said the mother, after having completed the pinchings and smoothings of Patty's

dress; "tell me how you like my cap, and my gown, and my *fichu*, and my cuffs, and my bag—in short, tell me, honestly, Donny, what you think of me, all over?"

"Lor, mamma! what an odd question!" cried her lively daughter, laughing, and turning round to assist in the scrutiny. "I'll defy him to say that you ain't very nicely dressed—though perhaps, as to *all over*, he may say that you look monstrous big."

"I'll tell you what, Miss Patty, you will be half as big again before you are as old as me, take my word for it," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, a little chafed at the remark. "However," she added, with more complacency, "I am not so big as the duchess that we met this morning on the Pier—and I see so many large women here, all in their own carriages, that I am perfectly contented to be fat—I am quite sure it is the fashion."

"I am quite sure of it too, my dear," replied her husband. "Besided," he gallantly added, "when ladies are of as fine a height, and as nobly built as you are, they can carry off a great deal of fat without being at all the worse for it."

At this moment the bell of the house-door was heard to ring. Mrs. O'Donagough put her hand to her heart. "Oh! good gracious! Here they are!—Come and stand by me, Patty, that I may present you to her directly. I hope she has not got her husband with her, Donny! I dread the sight of that man."

"Hold your tongue! Don't be such a fool! They are on the stairs."

He was right. They *were* on the stairs, they were at the door—and the next moment they were in the room. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. O'Donagough would have known Agnes had they met her by chance. Her appearance indeed was most strikingly changed; yet though in a different style, she was perhaps more lovely than they had ever before seen her. She had gained at least an inch in height after her marriage, and the slight girl was now filled out, and rounded into the perfect symmetry of womanhood. "What a delicate creature!" was the exclamation she had often drawn forth as Agnes Willoughby—and "What an elegant creature!" was the phrase which invariably followed her now. The exquisite features, too, though still the same in outline, were changed, and even improved as to their general contour. And the expressive eyes, which formerly seemed to covet the shelter of their own fringed lids, and to speak, as it were, but in whispers of the treasure of intellect within, now, appearing to gather courage from looking on the husband who was rarely long together absent from her, showed in every glance a sort of ingenuous confidence of mind, by which a physiognomist might read the purity, simplicity, and strength of her character.

In her hand she led a slight young thing, as thin as a greyhound, who, though tall for thirteen and a half, nevertheless looked perhaps younger than she was. Her silken brown hair hung low, in clusters of thick curls round her neck; and her peculiarly simple white dress, with its plain *pélerine*, and the seaworthy Leghorn bonnet tied closely with a ribbon of its own colour, under her chin, gave her decidedly the air of a child. Behind them followed General Hubert, who showed that a fine person, a noble expression of countenance, a military carriage, and graceful address, may altogether constitute a very handsome man, even though the lofty forehead be bald, and the thin curls that are left, sprinkled with silver.

Notwithstanding the entire absence of every species of affectation or pretension which so remarkably distinguished the manners of Mrs. Hubert, there was something in her general air and appearance which effectually checked all approaches to familiarity in those who were not privileged to use it—and, to say the truth, it would have been difficult to find any gentleman and lady whose appearance would have placed Mr. Allen O'Donagough less at his ease than those who now entered his apartment. He bowed low, as he stood behind his wife, but with a movement that caused him to retreat, rather than advance. Patty, however, fearlessly opened her large eyes upon the strangers, and having no European scale of classification in her head, felt little daunted by encountering an aspect and demeanour altogether new to her; so entirely, indeed, did she "possess her soul," as they walked up the room, as mentally to ejaculate, "Well, if that lanky thing is my fine cousin, I shan't mind her a bit. She won't put my nose out, any how. What a bonnet!—my!"

But it was not to speculations such as occupied the minds of either her husband or her child that Mrs. O'Donagough gave way. It was, as she would have expressed it, the heart that spoke, and not the judgment, when she rushed forward, and opening her expansive arms, inclosed within them the graceful, yet embarrassed Mrs. Hubert. So long indeed did she hold her there, that the bystanders felt embarrassed too, not well knowing what to do with their eyes, or how to perform their own parts in a scene of such deep interest.

At length, however, the elder lady released the younger one from her strict embrace, and then retiring a step, stood gazing at her with clasped hands, and head advanced, as nearly as possible like a devotee offering adoration before a favourite shrine.

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, "do I indeed behold my sister's child?" A very well-looking pocket-handkerchief, with its laced corner protruding, as if instinct

with sympathy, from her bag, was here drawn forth, and did its duty well. "Oh! my dearest Agnes, I can hardly believe my eyes! So lovely still, and yet so greatly altered! Oh! how my heart has longed for this dear moment! But I must not be thus selfish, thus absorbed! Mr. O'Donagough, let me present you to my dear niece. General Hubert, forgive me, if at first I could see nothing but your charming wife! I hope I see you well; permit me to present my husband to you—Mr. O'Donagough, General Hubert—General Hubert, Mr. O'Donagough—and this is your child, Agnes!—Dear creature!—How excessively like the general!" And then, whether tempted by the resemblance, or by the fond feelings of a great-aunt, she very nearly caught the young lady from the ground, and pressed her so closely to her bosom, as to produce an involuntary "Oh!" from the lips of the nearly "spoilt child." This over, Mrs. O'Donagough next turned to her own daughter, though the last, not the least important of her evolutions, and taking her red young hand, placed it in the delicately-gloved palm of Mrs. Hubert. That lady, as in duty bound, kissed her cousin—but her long ringlets, and her fine colour, her large bright eyes, and her magnificent gown, altogether brought Aunt Betsy, and all her peculiar notions, to her mind so forcibly, that she almost trembled as she remembered that this most dear relation was expected to pay them a visit at Brighton, almost immediately.

"But mercy on me! how I let you stand!" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, perfectly satisfied that the earnest look given both by the general and his lady to her daughter, proceeded from admiring astonishment. "Let us sit down, dearest Agnes;" and marshalling her and her daughter, who still held tightly by her hand, to the sofa, placed herself on a chair before it; while the general, bowed into an arm-chair beside it by Mr. O'Donagough, found himself under the necessity of making conversation that might suit the habits and prejudices of his host, concerning whose strict conformity to the methodist persuasion, he felt not the least doubt.

"You have been long absent from this country, sir?" said the general.

A slight twitching might have been perceptible about the mouth of Mr. Allen O'Donagough, as he listened to this question, but he instantly recovered himself and replied, "It has indeed been a long absence, General Hubert."

Without either snuffling, lisping, or in any other obvious and ordinary manner altering his voice, there was something in Mr. Allen O'Donagough's manner of saying these few words, that made his wife, notwithstanding her earnest attention to what her darling Agnes was saying, look up at him with surprise. But she was a quick-witted, intelligent woman, and half a

moment's consideration enabled her to recollect why it was he spoke now as she had never heard him speak before. It was less than half a smile that passed over her face, as cause and effect thus became perceptible to her, but this half-smile spoke a whole world of conjugal admiration.

Mrs. O'Donagough now obtained sufficient mastery over the first burst of her emotions, to look at the daughter of Agnes with some attention. From her youth upwards she had studied beauty, both male and female, too sedulously, not to perceive under the close straw bonnet, a promise at least of good regular features, and something more than a promise of remarkably fine eyes. Nevertheless, on the whole, the examination awakened no maternal jealousy. She could not for a moment entertain a doubt as to which was the handsomest, her daughter, or her great-niece. There sat her charming Patty, all glow, all brightness, in the very perfection of that undeniable "*beauté de diable*" which rarely, indeed, fails to illuminate the features of a womanly girl of fourteen; while beside her sat Elizabeth Hubert, pale, and by no means particularly fair, and with a countenance unawakened to all the thousand little conscious *agaceries*, which are sure to play and sparkle about such eyes and lips as those of Martha O'Donagough. Moreover, she looked such a mere child, that any comparison between them seemed preposterous.

"What a poor little weasel of a girl!" thought the well-pleased Mrs. O'Donagough, as she looked at her; "and her mother reckoned such a prodigious beauty too! Well to be sure, it is impossible not to feel something like triumph at the difference." Such were her thoughts, but all she uttered of them was, "Is this dear child your eldest girl, my dearest Agnes?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Hubert, "she is my eldest girl—but we have two boys older."

"Oh! yes—I remember. And this dear creature, then, is your Elizabeth, for whom you told me General Hubert's aunt, Lady Elizabeth Norris, and your own great-aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Compton, stood godmothers."

"Yes: this is Elizabeth."

"Is she in good health, my dearest Agnes?"

"Perfectly so."

"She is so *very* pale and thin! isn't she?

"Nothing can be thinner, certainly—but we do not reckon her particularly pale. None of our children are fresh-coloured—but they have all excellent health."

"Then, my dear love, you must be contented with that—which after all is the first of blessings, and of infinitely more real importance, than all the beauty in the world. But, to be sure, she is the youngest-looking creature of her age that I ever

saw. Who would believe, Agnes, that there was not more than five months difference in age between your girl and mine."

"No one, certainly," replied Mrs. Hubert, with a smile.

"Is it possible!" said General Hubert, who found it rather difficult to keep up a conversation with his sanctified-looking host; "is it possible, that Miss O'Donagough is not more than five months older than Elizabeth?"

"That is all, general, I assure you," replied Mrs. O'Donagough. "But the air of Sydney, you know, is counted the finest in the world, and I think that is likely to have a great deal to do with the improvement of children. But your dear girl is not very short neither—only she looks so little and childish-like compared to Patty. However, that is a fault that will mend every day—won't it, dear?"

Elizabeth, on being thus addressed, smiled, though without speaking, and the beauty of that sweet smile perfectly startled the critical Mrs. O'Donagough.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed, with very blunt sincerity, "how pretty she is when she smiles! Oh, dear! that is so like poor Sophy!"

"Is she indeed like my mother, aunt?" said Mrs. Hubert, with some emotion.

"The smile is exactly like her," replied Mrs. O'Donagough. "And your mother was very slight, too; but nothing like so little as Elizabeth, at her age."

"We never reckoned Elizabeth so very little," said the general, laughing; "but rather the contrary. Do let the young ladies stand up together—I know that is a very regular and orthodox ceremony, which always ought to be performed when cousins meet for the first time; and, moreover, I doubt if the English lass be not the taller of the two."

"Stand up, Martha!" said Mr. Allen O'Donagough, with much solemnity.

The young lady obeyed; but there was a little toss of the head, and a little curl of the lip, that spoke, involuntarily perhaps, the scorn which the idea of any sort of measurement between herself and her cousin created.

"Come, Elizabeth," cried the general.

Elizabeth stood up, and yielded herself smiling and blushing to the hands of her father, who having himself untied her bonnet and laid it aside, placed her back to back with her cousin.

Mrs. O'Donagough looked at her again, as she thus stood with her head uncovered, and something very nearly approaching to a frown, contracted her brow. She said not a word more about her departed sister, or the beauty of her smiles; but after a disagreeable sort of struggle with her own judgment, she

inwardly ejaculated, "If that girl was *my* daughter, I should make something of her."

The military eye of General Hubert had not deceived him. There was but little difference in the height of the young ladies, but that little was decidedly in favour of Miss Hubert.

"You see I am right, ladies," said he; "I have been used to measuring recruits by my eye."

"Am I *shortest*, mamma?" said Patty, in a tone that expressed both vexation and incredulity.

"Why, yes, you are, my dear," replied her mother; "I am sure I don't know how it can be—you look so very much bigger and older."

"Oh! what a maypole I must be!" said the still blushing Elizabeth, replacing her bonnet, and thereby eclipsing one of certainly the least *ordinary* faces that ever was looked upon. The rounded contour of the oval, indeed, that might be hoped for hereafter, was not yet there; and, excepting when excited, the delicate cheek was pale. But the forehead, eyes, nose, and beyond all else, the finely-cut full lips, with that rare Grecian wavy line, which gives a power of expression possessed by few, were all pre-eminently handsome; and had it not been for the conviction that her niece Agnes never did, nor never would know how to make the most of beauty, the last state of Mrs. O'Donagough's mind, respecting the parallel inevitably drawn between their two daughters, would have been considerably worse than the first. As it was, however, when Elizabeth again sat down with her close bonnet, and her quiet look of perfect childishness,—while Martha, after a momentary arrangement of her curls before the glass, turned round upon her with a throat as white as ivory, cheeks like a cabbage-rose, and eyes that darted liquid beams of youthful sauciness, with all the airs and graces of conscious beauty,—it was utterly impossible she should feel otherwise than well contented with her.

The visit lasted about twenty minutes longer, which, to say the truth, seemed quite long enough to all parties; yet, when Mrs. Hubert rose to take leave, her fond aunt was almost clamorous that she should stay a little longer.

"Oh, dearest Agnes! must I lose you already! Think what a time it is since last we met! It is *such* a treat to see you:" *et cetera, et cetera.*

"We shall have the pleasure of seeing you to-morrow, aunt," replied Agnes, kindly, "and of course my cousin will come with you; unless, indeed, she would like to come earlier," she added, recollecting herself, "and share Elizabeth's two o'clock dinner? Perhaps this would be the best way, as it would enable them to take a walk by the sea together, afterwards.

The operations of thought are proverbially rapid with us all; but Mrs. O'Donagough was a particularly quick person, and even before her niece had ceased to speak, the pros and cons for this nursery sort of invitation to Martha had passed through her mind. But, notwithstanding all this quickness, it was really not a very easy matter to decide. She was perfectly aware that it would make her daughter, what the young lady herself called "as mad as fire;" but, on the other hand, it would probably lead to much greater intimacy. Against it was the obvious fact, that the beautiful dress projected, and already prepared for the occasion, could not possibly be worn; but then, all the people in Brighton would have an opportunity of seeing the young people together on the beach, exactly as if they were one family.

In this dilemma, Mrs. O'Donagough wisely took the course which could most easily admit of retreat; and with a countenance beaming with affection and pleasure replied, "There is nothing in the world she would like so well, my dear Agnes! At what time shall she be with you?"

"A little before two, if you please." And then the final adieus were exchanged, and the visitors departed.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE O'Donagough family remained perfectly silent till the door of the house was distinctly heard to close after their departing guests; and even then, Mr. O'Donagough, who had stepped to the window, and so placed his eyes as to obtain a sidelong glance after them, continued to hold his finger to his nose, in token that no word was to be spoken till they had passed beyond the possibility of hearing it.

Perhaps this extreme caution arose from a sort of prophetic consciousness on the part of Mr. O'Donagough, that when his daughter did speak, it was likely to be with considerable energy. Nor, if this were the case, did he at all miscalculate. No sooner did his finger quit his nose, and his eyes direct themselves into the room, instead of out of it, than his wife and daughter both

**Cried "Havock!" and let slip the dogs of war!**

In plain prose, they both burst forth into the most vehement and unsparing abuse of Miss Hubert's dress, manner, and general appearance.

"Isn't it a most extraordinary and unaccountable thing," exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, "that such a really elegant-

looking woman as my niece Agnes, should choose to let her daughter go such a fright? Did any one ever see such an object? It is a perfect mystery to me; and that is the truth."

"And pray how is she to help it?" replied Patty. "Her mother did not make her, I suppose?"

"If she did not make her, she made her bonnet," rejoined her mother, "or at any rate she made her put it on; and I am sure that if it had been an old extinguisher it could not have answered better for turning her into an object and a fright."

"Lor! mamma! what does the bonnet signify? It only looks as if they hadn't a penny in the world. But you won't pretend to tell me that if that lanky monster of a girl was to have as beautiful a bonnet as my pink one on, it would make her look like anything else but what she is? and that's as ugly as sin, and you know it."

"Well, Patty," said her father, "and if she is, it's all the better for you, my dear; so I don't see why you should look so put out about it. If what your mother says is to come true, and you are to be taken to court and everywhere along with her, it is a great deal better that you should outdo her, than that she should outdo you."

These judicious remarks considerably softened the aspect of Miss O'Donagough. She no longer looked like a hedgehog in attitude of declared hostility to all comers, nay she almost smiled as she replied,

"Lor a mercy, papa! you don't think I'm going to cry because my cousin isn't a beauty, do you?"

"I am sure I can't say what may happen about the taking Patty to court, Mr. O'Donagough," observed Mrs. O'Donagough, with rather an anxious look. "That, you know, must depend altogether on the degree of intimacy that grows between us, and of course it will depend in a very great measure upon Patty herself."

"Oh, my gracious!" cried the young lady, "I am sure I shan't do anything to get intimate with that scaramouch of a girl, so you need not reckon upon it,—mind that. I'd see the queen, and the king too, if there was one, and all the princes and princesses upon the face of the earth, at the bottom of the Red Sea before I'd demean myself to lick the feet of such a nasty, vulgar, ugly beast of a girl as that."

"Now, Patty, I think you go rather too far," said her father; "not that I want you to lick anybody's feet—that's not the best way to get on in the world. But though your cousin is not to be compared with you, as a fine handsome bouncing girl of her age, I don't think she is too ugly to speak to, either. Do you know, I should not wonder if some people were to think her quite pretty."

The quills rose again in the eyes, and on the lips, of the susceptible Patty. "How can you stand there talking such nonsense, papa," said she, sharply, "as if I cared whether she was pretty or ugly? But when mamma talks of our getting intimate with her, or of our ever being such friends as Betty Sheepshanks and I was, it is altogether provoking, and I would advise you both to give up the notion at once; for it never will, and it never shall be. Nasty, stiff, great baby!"

"I tell you what, Patty," said Mrs. O'Donagough stoutly, though secretly trembling at the reception her unpalatable invitation to the nursery dinner was likely to receive, "I tell you what, miss, if you choose to set up your back at my relations in this way, I'll never try to make one of them take notice of you, and I should like to see where you would be then, and what good all the nice clothes I have been getting together would prove, without a single soul to look at them? Don't keep knitting your brows that way, Patty. You don't look much handsomer than your cousin now, I can tell you. I only wish you could see yourself."

"Well, ma'am, I can see myself easy enough, if that's all," replied Miss Patty, turning to the looking-glass, arranging her hair, and then flashing round again upon her admiring mother, "I am not at all ashamed to look at my own face."

"It would be rather odd if you were, Patty; I won't deny that," said Mrs. O'Donagough, smiling with a look of very undisguised admiration. "But that's neither here nor there, my dear, we won't talk of your beauty before your face, because that's very bad manners; and into the bargain it is a great deal more to the purpose to determine what it will be the best to do about the time of your going to-morrow, my dear. My niece Agnes, who, I must say, seems inclined to do everything in her power to make you and Elizabeth as intimate as possible, has desired, as the greatest favour in the world, that you would spend the whole day with her; that is to say, go quite early, Patty, and not ceremoniously like your papa and me, you know, at six o'clock, but between one and two, that you may take a long chatty ramble with her by the sea-side, after an early dinner. I hope you will like that, my dear? I am sure it is paying you a monstrous compliment."

"Like it!" replied Patty, raising her voice to a very shrill tone, "*I* like playing at being a baby all day long, with that stupid oaf of a girl! I can't and I won't, and that's flat."

"Nonsense, Patty," said Mr. O'Donagough, "*that's* not the way to get on, I promise you. I won't have you quarrel with your bread and butter in that style. Go? To be sure you will, and be thankful too, if you know what's what."

"And pray what am I to do about my beautiful striped

gauze dress, and my blue satin shoes? Am I to walk out with Miss Gawky in that fashion?"

"No, my dear, that is quite impossible. No, you cannot go full dressed, as we intended, that is entirely out of the question, for this time," said her mother; "you must just wear your new *mousseline de laine*, Patty. It is an elegant thing, and yet quite good style for a morning. And your pink bonnet, you know, and the scarf; so that you will be perfectly first-rate in appearance, and enjoy, besides, the enormous advantage of letting everybody in Brighton see that you are one of the Hubert family."

"I wish, with all my soul," cried Patty, "that every one of the Hubert family had been packed off for Botany Bay the day we left it! I see as plain as daylight that you and papa both mean to lead me the life of a dog about 'em. You will make me run away, if you do, I'll tell you that, for I know I can't bear it."

"Don't put yourself in such a fuss, Patty, for heaven's sake!" said her mother, but more coaxingly than scoldingly; for she still stood in very considerable dread of a final and positive refusal. "Think, my dear girl, before you say so, of the beautiful fine parties, and the beaux, and the dances you'll be sure to come in for in Berkeley-square, if you do but play your cards well now. Think of all this, Patty, and do your very best to get thick with Elizabeth Hubert."

"Patty, your mother's right this time," said Mr. O'Donagough, "so go at the time fixed, and say no more about it. I'll take you into a box at the playhouse the night after, if you'll be a good girl."

Miss O'Donagough had a phrase which will explain the effect these words produced upon her, namely—

"When papa's in earnest he *is* in earnest." The promised play, too, undoubtedly helped her decision; and altogether she was induced, after distorting her much-admired beauty by more than one grimace, to reply, "Well, if I must, I must; but it is as bad as being whipped, I can tell you that."

The subject was then judiciously permitted to drop, and the far future of next winter in London, with all the joys it *might* bring, took its place; effectually arming the mind of Patty for the endurance of whatever present annoyance might arise, which, acting like catholic penances, should lead to such a paradise!

Meanwhile, General Hubert, his lady and daughter, pursued their way homeward. It was, probably, not altogether from lack of a subject that they walked on so silently; but instead of words, Mrs. Hubert only pressed her husband's arm, to which he replied by somewhat of a more caressing pressure

in return, and the quietly-smiling pronunciation of the word "Well?" Neither did their daughter say much, continuing to hold her mother's hand in silence till the door-bell of their own mansion had been rung; and then smiling a little, and colouring a good deal, she said, "Is not my cousin older than I am, mamma?"

"She looks a vast deal older, certainly," was the reply.

"Do you think she will like to play at looking for shells among the shingles, with Emily and me?"

"Perhaps, not, my dear. You must endeavour to entertain her by rational conversation," said Mrs. Hubert, entering the house, and not sorry, perhaps, to interrupt the discussion, by desiring her daughter immediately to get ready for our dinner, which was waiting for her. It was *tête-à-tête*, therefore, that General Hubert and his wife entered the drawing-room, and there was something whimsical enough in the manner in which their eyes encountered after silently seating themselves in two arm-chairs, which faced each other.

Agnes pursed up her beautiful mouth, and endeavoured to look grave; but the moment her eyes met those of her husband, they both laughed. This movement of the muscles, however, was quite involuntary on the part of the lady, and speedily mastering it, she said, "Pray don't, General Hubert, pray don't laugh at it! What *can* we do?"

"I cannot choose but laugh, Agnes," replied her husband, "if you look so comically dismayed. And after all, my dear, I cannot say that we have seen anything that ought greatly to surprise us. Your Aunt Barnaby is as little altered as it is possible she could be in the time, I think. Of Mr. O'Donagough I have no remembrance, but he appears to me quite as well-looking and respectable a personage as we could reasonably hope for. Rather evangelical, I suspect; but under the circumstances I see no reason to object to this. And as for their daughter, I cannot but think that she is as precisely what Mrs. Barnaby's daughter might be expected to be, as it is possible to imagine. Wherefore, dear wife, look not so despondingly, but thank the gods that matters are no worse."

All this was said lightly and gaily, but Mrs. Hubert seemed to have lost all inclination to laugh.

"I would not be ungrateful to the gods, Montague," said she, "but I must own I feel the arrival of the O'Donagoughs to be a very great misfortune."

"No, no, not so," returned her husband; "not a very great misfortune, Agnes. You must not class it so. Aunt Betsy will be a little outrageous, perhaps, but we must contrive to soothe her; and for the rest, be quite sure that a little good management to prevent our meeting often, and a little quiet, patient

civility when we do meet, will suffice to prevent any very serious annoyance."

"But our girl, Hubert? You take the thing so admirably *en philosophe*, that I will cease to torment myself about you. But is it not grievous that Elizabeth should—"

"Find a cousin more bright and blooming than herself? We must bear this, Agnes," said the general; "but this is all. Miss O'Donagough will do Elizabeth no harm, you may depend upon it."

Soothed, if not satisfied, Mrs. Hubert indulged in no more repinings for the present; and feeling something like self-reproach at having experienced so much more vehement a distaste for her relations than her noble husband appeared to do, she determined as far as possible to conquer, or at any rate to conceal it. To Elizabeth she said little more on the subject; but to Miss Wilmot, the daughter of her own early friend and instructress, she ventured to speak with entire freedom. The peculiarities of her "Aunt Barnaby" were already perfectly well known to this lady; and, therefore, without scruple of any kind, she ventured to confess to her, that although she wished every possible attention and kindness to be shown to Miss O'Donagough, she did not wish the intercourse between the young ladies to grow into intimacy.

"Elizabeth is so childish, Miss Wilmot," continued Mrs. Hubert, "that though I do not greatly fear her catching the singular manners of this poor girl, I think she may not be capable of—of disliking them, I believe is the only honest word, as much as I wish her to do."

"Not having yet seen the young lady," replied Miss Wilmot, smiling, "I can give no opinion upon this; but, if Miss O'Donagough be like what Mrs. Compton describes her mother to have been, Elizabeth will not like her too well."

Very punctually at two o'clock Mr. O'Donagough himself conducted his young daughter to the door of General Hubert, and there took leave of her till the evening—his parting words being, "Now, Patty, mind your p's and q's. I know your mother often plagues you with a monstrous deal of preaching about one thing and another, and you know I never scold you for laughing at it. But she's right this time about making the very best of yourself with those stiff disagreeable people—mind that, Patty."

"Don't you trouble yourself about my turning 'em all to good account, if anything 's to be got out of 'em," replied the young lady with an expressive wink of the left eye; "and if I mind my hits that way, I expect you'll let me hate 'em as much as I please. That is fair, isn't it?"

The house-door opened as she finished the sentence, and

her father departed, replying to it only by an acquiescent nod.

Miss O'Donagough was immediately ushered into the back-parlour, where the table was already spread for dinner, and her two cousins seated on either side of their governess, who was reading to them Miss Edgeworth's tale of the Prussian Vase. All three rose to receive her. The little Emily, as well as Miss Wilmot was properly introduced by Elizabeth, and the necessary quantity of hand-shaking performed, while Miss Wilmot, laying aside the splendid pink bonnet and scarf of the gaily-dressed visitor, smiled furtively aside, as she remembered Mrs. Hubert's anxiety lest her pupil should be incapable of judging fitly of the peculiar graces she displayed.

There was, however, in Elizabeth's behaviour to her cousin, no symptom of her having as yet formed any judgment of her at all, for her manner spoke only the most perfect good humour and civility, a little blended with embarrassment.

"Do you like the sea, cousin Martha?" was the first attempt at the "rational conversation" her mother had recommended.

"What, sailing upon it?" rejoined Miss Martha.

"No, I meant walking near it, and looking at it," replied Elizabeth. "But I should like you to tell me all about sailing too. You have sailed a great way, have you not? And I have never been on the sea at all, except between Dover and Calais; and even that, you know, is not sailing. Did you like your voyage?"

"Like it! yes, to be sure I did. It's monstrous good fun!"

"I think I should like it too," said Elizabeth. "I never see any large ship passing up and down the channel, without wishing to be aboard her."

"I don't know about *your* liking it," replied Miss Martha. "I think you seem too young to take such pleasure in it as I did. And besides, I don't believe—There's no fun I mean on board ship—at least I should think so—unless people are nearly grown up. I don't think children would be taken so much notice of."

"Do you think so?" said Elizabeth, innocently. "I should fancy children might be very well amused. Don't you think, Emily, that you should like to run up and down the deck of a great, large ship?"

"Yes, I should," said the little one, stoutly; "and I should not care if anybody noticed me or not."

"I suppose not, indeed, you little thing!" said Martha, laughing.

"Did the sea disagree with you at all, Miss O'Donagough?" inquired Miss Wilmot.

"Oh, lor, yes; I was as sick as a cat for the first week!" replied the young lady. "You never saw anything like it in your life. No sooner did I swallow anything—you understand?" (with an appropriate grimace.) "But I had a good friend on board who took capital care of me, and always showed me which side of the ship to walk, and helped me up and down, and all that sort of thing, you know; and so by degrees it went off, and then I was as jolly as a tinker, and such an appetite! Oh, my! How I did eat! And then we got to famous fun with ship-billiards; and all the rest of the time, till we got to Sheerness, I liked it better than anything else in the whole world."

"And after Sheerness, I suppose you felt impatient to get to land?" said Elizabeth.

"Yes, I did," succinctly replied Miss O'Donagough.

"I do not wonder at that. I think you must have been so impatient to see England!"

"Oh no, not I! I did not care a straw about England just then. But we lost one of our best friends at Sheerness, and that spoilt everything."

"Had you many passengers on board?"

"I am sure I hardly know anything about 'em. They were all nasty people."

"All nasty people!" exclaimed little Emily.

"Yes, little one—all nasty people;" replied Martha, laughing. "I suppose she thinks I mean all dirty people. What a funny little soul! When you are as old as me, Miss Emmy, you'll know what ladies mean, when they call people nasty. We don't mean dirty clothes, nor dirty faces neither; but just everybody we don't like."

"If you don't like me, will you say I am nasty?" demanded the little girl, looking at her rather reproachfully.

"To be sure I shall; but I won't dislike you if you'll give me a kiss, for I think you are very pretty.

"But if I was not very pretty, should you call me nasty?" persisted the child.

"Yes, I dare say I should; for I hate everybody that is not pretty," replied Martha; at the same time making one of her father's peculiar grimaces, in such a manner as to indicate that Miss Wilmot was in her thoughts. Without making any reply respecting the offered salute, the little Emily turned towards the governess, and after leaning against her knee for a minute or two, took an oportunity when she bent her head, of putting her arms round her neck, and giving her a kiss.

"Well now! if she isn't kept in good order, I'll wonder," said Martha, chuckling. "She knows what a whipping is, or I'm much mistaken." This was addressed in rather a low confidential voice to Elizabeth; but before she could reply to it, the door opened, and the dinner entered.

"That's no bad sight, early as it is for dining. I am hungry as a horse, Miss Elizabeth. Where am I to sit? Where here!—next to the old lady? Let me sit at the bottom carve, shall I? You shall see if I don't do it fit to be a marr woman. La! what a nice dinner! What a pity it is we h got no beaux!"

No opposition being made to Miss O'Donagough's placi herself at the bottom of the table, she sat down, and beg vigorously to attack a leg of lamb, intended as the *pièce résistance* of the entertainment.

"Will you not take some fish, Miss O'Donagough?" de manded Miss Wilmot.

"Yes, if there is butter and sauce with it," replied Martha "but some of you must have mutton, 'cause I've cut this piec off. Here, little one, you shall have it."

Emily looked into the face of her governess, but said nothing.

"Send it to me, my dear, if you please," said Miss Wilmot; "but do not cut any more yet. The young ladies both take fish." The dinner, sauce and all, being greatly to Miss O'Donagough's satisfaction, her spirits rose as it proceeded, and she went on in a sort of *crescendo* movement, eating and talking, till she had got into the highest possible good humour.

"Well, after all, I think we shall be monstrous good friends, Elizabeth?" said she, putting a third glass of custard into her plate; "and I don't know but what it may be better fun dining in this way, and eating as much as I like, than if I *had* come in my gauze frock, and sat up doing grand with the old fogrums in the dining-room. I do hate old people like poison—don't you?"

To this appeal, Elizabeth answered nothing; but almost involuntarily gave such a look to her governess, as friends are apt to exchange when something striking occurs, upon which, for the moment, they can make no other commentary. Martha saw this look, and interpreting it her own way, shook her curls, gave a slight laugh, and said no more, persuaded that her cousin had intended to caution her against being too open-hearted in the presence of that first and foremost of fogrums, her governess.

But although this persuasion silenced her for the moment, it rather added to her good humour; and, on setting out for the promised walk by the sea-side, she took the arm of Miss Hubert with very cousinly familiarity, and drew her forward with a rapid step, in the hope of outwalking the governess and Emily, and thereby insuring "a little fun," and a great deal of confidential communication.

Miss Wilmot, who knew her pupil well, and feared not any

Miss Patty makes herself quite at home at

injury to her from the association beyond its present annoyance, made no effort to overtake them; and contented herself by answering as sedately and discreetly as she could, the speculations of the little Emily on their guest, which partook largely of that peculiar vein of observation in which children sometimes remark on what appears ridiculous to them, with a freshness and keenness of quizzing that might be sought for in vain in the sallies of the most practised proficients in the art.

On reaching the steps in the cliff, Miss O'Donagough had the extreme delight of perceiving that two gay-looking youths in regimentals had just descended them, and were walking slowly onward the way they were about to go.

"Make haste, Elizabeth, ain't we lucky?" she exclaimed, on perceiving them, and setting the example of the speed she recommended, she placed her hand on the rail and ran down with extraordinary rapidity to the bottom of the flight. Though the light movements of her young companion hardly permitted her being very slow, Martha chid her delay, and ere she had fairly reached the last step, seized on her arm, and by a vigorous pull, obliged her to clear it by a jump.

"What a slow fool you are, Elizabeth!" she exclaimed, again taking her arm, and drawing her rapidly forward; "let us pass them directly, and I'll bet a guinea that before we have made five steps, they will pass us."

"Why do you wish them to pass us, Martha?" said her companion with perfect simplicity.

Miss O'Donagough looked back, thinking from these words that the governess must be within hearing; but, on the contrary, perceiving that she had stopped to fasten Emily's shoe, she began laughing in a tone so loud, that the young men both turned round to reconnoitre.

The moment their eyes fell upon the young ladies, they stepped aside, and permitted them to pass, raising their hats at the same time in salutation. Miss Hubert bowed, and walked on.

"Well done you, Elizabeth!" said her companion, strongly compressing her arm, and tittering very audibly. "How beautiful they look! don't they? But they are only ensigns, both of them, I can tell you that. I wish to goodness I knew their names."

"Do not speak so loud, cousin Martha, or they will hear you," said Elizabeth, innocently. "It is Lord William Southwood and Mr. Templeton."

"A lord!" cried the startled Martha, instantly turning round her head to look at them. "You don't say so? And he bowing to us so politely! Don't you think we had better sit down upon that stone? They must pass by it, you see, 'cause of the water coming in so. Isn't this capital fun?"

Miss Hubert was by no means a stupid girl, but she no more comprehended her cousin's exclamations, than if they had been uttered in Hebrew, and replied very simply, "No, don't sit there, Martha, there is a much better place a little farther on, where Miss Wilmot almost always lets us sit down, and if you *did* like looking for shells, you would find plenty there, such as they are."

"Looking for shells!" exclaimed Martha, bursting into loud laughter. "Oh, my! what a fool you are! or is it only put on, Elizabeth? That's it, I see through it, I'll be hanged if I don't. You are a deep one, with your bowings, and knowing so well what their names are, and all."

"What *do* you mean, cousin Martha? How can I help knowing the names of those two gentlemen, if it is of them you are speaking?" replied Miss Hubert. "They both dined at our house yesterday."

"Gracious goodness! Is that true, Elizabeth? Dined at your house?—and one of them a lord! Will they come there again to-day?"

"I do not know," replied Elizabeth, laughing in her turn; "but I am afraid not,—they do not come every day."

"Why didn't you speak to them, you stupid girl, if you know them so well?" demanded Martha, reproachfully.

"I don't know them well," replied her cousin; "I never see them, except for a very little while after dinner in the drawing-room."

"Have they been there more than once?" inquired Martha.

"Yes, several times, I think—at least Lord William has. I don't remember seeing the other so often."

"Oh! how I wish?—I do think it was very—" But both sentences, warmly as they flowed from her heart, were cut short ere completed by the prudent Martha, who at that moment recalled her mother's words concerning the importance of an intimate intercourse with the Hubert family. Never did the admonition of a parent come more forcibly upon the heart of a child.

"I must keep in with 'em, if I die for it!" was the mental exclamation which followed the remembrance of this maternal warning; and, perceiving, on once more turning round her head, that the officers had changed the direction of their walk, she again took the arm of her cousin, who had quitted her side for a moment to examine a choice morsel of sea-weed, and began a direct and deliberate attack upon her affections, by praising her eyes, and the handkerchief that was tied round her neck; hinting, that she thought her mamma kept her a great deal too back, and that her governess was already afraid of her; concluding with an assurance that she never liked any girl so well

before in all her life, and that she hoped to her heart they should be very *very* intimate, and stick together like very near relations, as they really were.

To all this, Elizabeth answered gently and civilly, but reached home at last with a feeling of self-reproach for being so very tired of her cousin's company.

Their tea-table awaited their return, and, notwithstanding the sublime speculations for the future, which filled the heart and head of Miss O'Donagough, the cherries and the cakes spread before her were sufficiently attractive to keep her tranquilly in the school-room, till the ladies had left the dinner-parlour.

"Now we will go up stairs, and see your mamma, shall we?" said Miss Hubert.

"Oh, yes! if you will—I'm quite ready when I've done eating this one queen-cake more. And you really don't know if there's any officers or not dining here?" replied her cousin.

"No, indeed, I do not," was the unsatisfactory reply.

It is very probable that neither the aunt nor the niece were very sorry to have their *tête-à-tête* interrupted by the entrance of Miss Wilmot and the young ladies. Mrs. O'Donagough had already obtained all particulars respecting the present residence and manner of life of her "dear brother-in-law," Mr. Willoughby, and of the number of grandchildren bestowed upon him by his daughter Nora—had expressed the most "heartfelt delight," at hearing that she would be sure to see them all during the ensuing season in London, and was by that time quite ready to scrutinise the countenance of her daughter, in order to ascertain how the *long day* had answered.

Great was the contentment which attended this examination of a countenance exceedingly capable of showing whether its owner were pleased or the contrary. It was immediately evident to Mrs. O'Donagough that her daughter was in one of her most amiable moods; and though there had been no party at dinner, and consequently but little opportunity of displaying the studied elegance of her own appearance, still "the style of everything about her *darling Agnes*," was such as to make her feel more sensibly than ever the immense importance of being united to her by the tenderest ties of affection. It could not, therefore, fail of being very delightful to her to perceive that Martha, whom, as she had told her husband, "she greatly feared she should find in the dumps," was radiant in smiles and good humour, and apparently on the best possible terms with that "stupid shy-looking thing," her cousin.

Not only, indeed, had the dinner, the servants, and the plate of her beloved Agnes, excited all the warm affections of Mrs. O'Donagough's heart, but the observations she had made

on her husband during the repast, tended to convince her very forcibly, that he, too, cautiously as he had hitherto expressed his feelings on the subject, attached great importance to the connection. Never had she before seen him as he appeared to her on this important day. Quiet, reserved, respectful, rather religious in his language, but with amiable humility abstaining from giving too serious a tone to the conversation, his wife gazed and listened with equal admiration and astonishment, while he developed a degree of talent, for which she, even in her fondest days, had never given him credit.

"It shall not be my fault," said she, internally, "if he is not rewarded for all this cleverness. He knows what he is about as well as most men, and he shan't be stopped for want of a helping hand from me."

Accordingly Mrs. O'Donagough was enchanted, beyond the power of language to express, with her "little great-niece, Emily," declared Elizabeth "by far the loveliest creature she had ever seen," and was obliged to pull out her pocket-handkerchief when speaking of their dear grandmother, and the astonishing likeness which they both bore her.

Mrs. Hubert listened to it all with great sweetness, but suffered no great time to elapse between the coffee and the tea, and hinted to Miss Wilmot that she did not wish Emily to be kept up beyond her usual hour.

Very soon after her departure, Mr. O'Donagough broke off his mild discussion with the general on the importance of enforcing a pure morality throughout the army, and rising said,

"I am afraid it is getting very late, my dear; you know my habits, and must not suffer even the happiness of this blessed re-union to interfere with what we know to be our duty."

On this Mrs. O'Donagough rose too, with a look of meekness that really seemed quite angelic, saying, "Oh! no—not for the world!" and, as if moved by the most perfect family sympathy, Martha slapped-to the volume of engravings she was examining at the same moment, so that the leave-taking was sudden and prompt, and in less than two minutes after it began, the Allen O'Donagough family found themselves enjoying the sea-breeze on the broad flag-stones of the Marine Parade.

"Thank God, that's over!" cried Mr. Allen O'Donagough, as soon as they had fairly cleared the premises.

"*I* shall not be sorry to get home and have a draught of porter, it has been so dreadfully hot all day," observed his lady. "But to be sure, nothing *could* be kinder or more flattering!"

"Oh, lor! I am as tired as a dog," exclaimed Martha, stretching out her arms, and yawning vehemently; "but I don't care a straw—I know what I know about the people that visit there, and I'll be hanged if I don't take care to be one of them."

"You are your father's own child, Patty!" said Mr. O'Donagough, recovering his usual tone; "we shall make something of 'em between us."

"Well! to be sure it is a pleasure to introduce you both to my relations! and depend upon it, you will never repent being civil to them," said his wife, with rather a mysterious nodding of the head, made visible as they reached their own door, by the light of the lamp that hung over it.

## CHAPTER XIII.

"It is quite bed-time, mamma, is it not?" said Elizabeth Hubert as the door closed after the O'Donagough family. "I am very, *very* sleepy!"

"Good night, my dear," replied her mother, holding up her face to receive the farewell salute.

"Good night, papa," said Elizabeth, passing on to her father. But before he accepted the kiss offered to him, he detained her by the hand for a moment, saying,

"What makes you look so very weary to-night, my dear girl? Have you walked more than usual to-day?"

"No, papa. We have walked very little to-day," replied the young lady.

"What is the matter then, dearest? You do not feel unwell, I hope. Do you?"

Elizabeth stopped short in the middle of a yawn to laugh. "Oh! no, papa! Pray do not send for the doctor! I feel perfectly well, only very sleepy."

"Perhaps you are tired of talking, Elizabeth? You and your young cousin have had time for a great deal of conversation. Did she tell you much about New South Wales?" demanded her father.

Elizabeth shook her head as she replied, "No, not a word."

"What then did you talk about?" asked the general.

Elizabeth again laughed, and again shook her head.

"Is that shake of the head to be considered as oracular as that of my Lord Burleigh? Does it mean a very great deal," said her father.

"It means, papa, that I really and truly do not know what she talked about," replied Elizabeth.

"That is to say, you forget it. I presume, my dear, that when the discourse was going on, you knew of what subject, or subjects, it treated?"

"No, indeed, papa, I did not," was the quick reply. "My cousin said a great many things altogether, I believe, but I quite

mean that I do not know what they were all about. I did not always understand her."

"Did you find her upon the whole an agreeable companion, Elizabeth?"

In reply to this direct inquiry, Miss Hubert, after hanging down her head a little, and looking for a minute or two rather embarrassed, replied,

"No, papa, I did not; and I do not think that my cousin Martha found me an agreeable companion either. Nor do I believe that we shall ever be very great friends."

"Why so, my dear?" said her father, drawing her somewhat closer to him.

"Because she does not seem to know or care the least in the world about anything that I like; and I do not know or care at all more concerning all she talks about."

"Well, Elizabeth!" replied her father, "this is unfortunate, but perhaps not very extraordinary. However, you know we may be all very kind and obliging to her, nevertheless."

"Oh! certainly, papa! of course, because she is a very near relation. Only perhaps, as she is so very womanly, mamma would invite her next time to dine with you, and let Emily and me come into the drawing-room before you come up stairs, as usual. And then, for the rest of the evening, and when we were all together, I should not mind it at all."

Mrs. Hubert, who had changed her place while this conversation was going on, and seated herself close behind her husband, whose arm was thrown round his daughter, could hardly repress a smile at this improved plan of operations, but she did not permit it to be seen, and said, with much matter-of-fact gravity, "I believe you are right, my dear; and if her mamma makes no objection, I certainly will do so. Accident, education, perhaps the climate in which she was born, seem to have made this young cousin prematurely a woman, and throwing you together as girls of the same age, must, I have no doubt, be equally irksome to both. We will not do so again, Elizabeth. Good night, dearest."

Miss Hubert repaid this expression of maternal sympathy with a very tender kiss, and bestowing one also on her father, with rather more fondness than usual, as if to show that she was exceedingly obliged by having encountered no opposition to the extraordinary measures she had been bold enough to recommend, she left the room apparently in excellent spirits, and without any external symptoms remaining of the extreme weariness of which she had complained.

"Miss Wilmot is right," exclaimed Mrs. Hubert, as soon as the door was closed. "There is evidently no danger of Elizabeth's liking this terrible cousin too well."

"Why, yes, my dear," replied the general, "I think you may be tolerably easy on that point. And now, Agnes, to speak without any jesting at all, I trust that your spirits will recover their tranquillity, and that you will cease to look every now and then as if you had just recollected some dreadful calamity that was hanging over you. The cause, my love, is really not sufficient to justify the effect. We are not the first people in the world, depend upon it, who have had a queer looking set of cousins arrive from distant lands to claim kindred with them. Will you promise not to worry yourself about it any more?"

"Yes, Montague. I shall behave better now. But I cannot tell you how I have dreaded the seeing my pure-minded, ingenuous Elizabeth falling into any tone of intimacy with my unfortunate young cousin; and yet it seemed almost inevitable, when two young things of equal age were thrown together. But I did not do our girl justice. Dear creature! I ought to have felt from the first that it was impossible."

"I think so, madonna," replied General Hubert, rather reproachfully. "However, I will forgive this misdoubting of the wisdom and good taste of fourteen, if you will promise to support with perfect equanimity whatever effervescence may chance to arise from the superabundance of these good gifts at threescore and ten. I confess to you, Agnes, I rather dread the arrival of aunt Betsy."

"And so do I too," replied his wife, laughing; "but it is with a very different sort of dread from what I felt, when in doubt as to the effect that might be produced by this new acquaintance on Elizabeth, and my dear, kind-hearted father, too! He will be here in a fortnight. And I perfectly well know what will happen. At first, he will feel that he cannot be too kind, too cordial in his welcome to my aunt—whereupon she will stun him with her eloquence, smother him with her affection, wear his spirits out by her incessant calls upon his admiration for her daughter, till he grows nervous—falls into a fit of the gout, and instead of benefiting by the sea breezes we have promised him, he will shut himself up in his room without saying a word about his sufferings to anybody, but suffering martyrdom nevertheless."

"Yes, that will be the progress exactly from benignity that desires the happiness of all the world, to a gentle melancholy meekly resigning every hope of it for himself. Nevertheless, I think that, by keeping guard over him pretty watchfully, I may be able, perhaps, to save him from a good deal of it. But who can keep guard over aunt Betsy? Who can prevent her seeing everything, hearing everything, comprehending everything, and—acting accordingly?"

"If she is very outrageous, we must laugh at her," replied Agnes; "not but it will be hers to laugh at us first. Do you remember her prognostications and her prophecies, Montague, when Mrs. O'Donagough first renewed the intercourse with us? Will she not have some cause to triumph now?"

"No, no, no, dear—not the least in the world," replied the general. "There will be room enough in our little island, depend upon it, both for the O'Donagough race and the Huberts too; and we must be very silly folks, certainly, if we cannot contrive to see as little of them as our own sense of propriety will permit us to do."

"Unquestionably it should be so," returned Agnes, musingly, "and, therefore, we will trust that so it will be. But tell me, Montague, what sort of conversation did that solemn-looking Mr. O'Donagough entertain you with, after we left the table? He is a singular-looking man, with an expression of countenance that seems to hover between natural audacity and affected sanctification."

"Yes," replied the general, "it is a remarkably puzzling face—and manner too. I cannot make him out."

"Did he talk much?"

"No; very little—and I doubt if aunt Betsy herself could have found much to object to in anything he uttered. Nevertheless, I dislike him, without being able exactly to explain why."

"Nay, General Hubert, I think that riddle may be easily read," replied Agnes; "both in person and manner he is coarse and ungentlemanlike."

"True! yet that seems hardly sufficient to explain the feeling I have about him. There was an evident air of restraint in every word he uttered, yet it did not seem to proceed from what is usually called shyness either, for his conversation, such as it was, consisted chiefly of questions concerning all our family connections, and in a style of pertinacity too, which shyness, I think, 'would gambol from.' Your father, in particular, and Frederick seemed to possess a strong hold upon his travelled memory."

"I suppose that was because my father was so very civil and good-natured the night of the famous leave-taking in Mrs. Peter's drawing-room," replied Mrs. Hubert.

"Yes, certainly, that may account for it as far as your father is concerned. But of the two, I think Mr. O'Donagough's interest seemed to be most keenly awake respecting everything of and concerning Frederick Stephenson—and I do not remember that Frederick did anything towards making an acquaintance with him on that memorable evening, beyond reconnoitring him from a distant sofa, through Nora's eyeglass,

which was, if you remember, the mode by which at that time Fred constantly assisted all defects real or imaginary in his visual organs."

"Oh! I can see him now!" returned Agnes, laughing. "How well I remember his attitude as she, naughty girl, hid her laughing face behind him!—I am sure it is very good-natured in Mr. O'Donagough, if he saw all that and forgave it."

"He appears perfectly to have forgiven it, I assure you—inquired with an air of great interest where Frederick chiefly resided, asked if he was as gay and lively as ever, and, if I mistake not, begged to know how many children he had—summing up the whole by assuring me that it would give him great pleasure to meet him again."

"Well, certainly that does look like being in a very friendly and affectionate frame of mind!" replied Mrs. Hubert, "and fortunately Nora never hears their names mentioned without declaring that she wished for nothing so much as to meet my aunt Barnaby again. I therefore see nothing to stop the renewal of the acquaintance so auspiciously begun through Nora's eyeglass."

"By the way, Agnes," resumed the general, "did not your aunt Barnaby on that occasion introduce her bridegroom as the *reverend* Mr. O'Donagough?"

"Oh, yes!—certainly she did. And I presume he is the reverend Mr. O'Donagough still, is he not?" returned Mrs. Hubert.

"I do not feel quite competent to answer that question," replied her husband. "He certainly did not tell me he was *not*, yet somehow or other I doubt it. I think, from his appearance, that it is most probable he went out as a missionary—not of the Church of England,—and if so, it is as likely as not, that on returning he left his frock behind him. He said something about young men's first ardent impressions and opinions being liable to change, and then muttered something about himself as being an example of this. But I felt no inclination for the autobiography which I fancied was coming upon me, and as he did not seem inclined to take wine, I put a stop to it by joining you."

"Very skilfully managed," said Agnes; "and to say truth, I have sufficient faith in your generalship, *mon général*, to prevent my having much fear about your individual annoyance. But of all our difficulties the greatest is behind! Alas! Montague, who is it must break to Aunt Betsy, on her arrival, the astounding fact that her niece, Martha, is in Europe—in England—in Sussex—in Brighton—perhaps in this very house! Who is it, General Hubert, that will tell her this?"

"Dearest Agnes! It can only be yourself," replied her husband, maliciously.

"Hubert! have you the heart?"

"Why, no, I rather think I have not," he replied. "But do you not think the wisest way will be for us to go through the scene together? If you insist upon my making the announcement *tête-à-tête*, you will have it all to go through again afterwards."

"True!—most true! Let us be together, Montague!"

"And pray, my love," resumed the general, laughing, "do you think it will be necessary to surround yourself with the same sort of *chevaux de frise* when the event is made known to your father?"

"Oh! no, not at all!—I am quite sure that everything which recalls the memory of my poor mother, has a charm for him. And then, observe, he has never seen my aunt Barnaby as you did, Montague, in the terrible days of her Clifton brilliance. Still less, if possible, does he know anything of her various offences against aunt Betsy; so that to this moment he is perfectly free from any feeling of dislike towards her of any kind. He must be aware, I suppose, that we have quizzed her letters a little—but that's nothing. And do you not think, dearest Montague, that it will be but right and proper to leave him as much as possible in the same favourable state of mind towards her? Poor thing! I fear she is not more likely to make friends now, than formerly, and her plea of being my own mother's sister does often come upon me with a painful conviction of its strength!"

"Let it not be painful, dear Agnes!" replied her husband, kindly; "you may be obliging and useful to her in many ways, which need not interfere with our own comfort. Depend upon it the worst part of the re-union is over. What Elizabeth says of the young lady, will infallibly prove true of the whole party. They are not at all more likely to like us than we are to like them, and I shrewdly suspect they are all three yawning at this moment with as much genuine weariness as ourselves. So let us go to rest, dearest, without permitting our Australian cousins to haunt us even in our dreams.

## CHAPTER XIV.

DURING the fortnight which followed, General and Mrs. Hubert, with their eldest daughter, were absent from Brighton on a visit, at a friend's house, about twenty miles distant. Mrs. O'Donagough considered this as a most unfortunate *contretems*, and bewailed her ill-luck accordingly; but to say the truth, neither her husband nor her daughter shared her sorrow.

Mr. Allen O'Donagough was perfectly satisfied for the present by having convinced himself that no floating vision of Major Allen existed in any cell of memory, either with the general or his lady, which could be called to light and life again by looking at him.

It was not then, and it was not there, however, that he hoped to profit by the acquaintance, and he was quite as well pleased to be left just at first in the free and unobserved enjoyment of his restoration to the pastimes of "auld lang syne," without having before his eyes the fear of not being sufficiently aristocratical in the estimation of General Hubert.

As to Miss Patty, the intensity of her happiness was much too great to leave room for anything like regret. Sallying forth at least six times in every day, sometimes in one smart set of ribbons, and sometimes in another, sure each time of meeting "*lots of men*," as she remarked to her mamma, "who did nothing but stare at her as long as she was in sight," how could she fail to await with patience the coming on of the adventures which she was determined to have some day or other with those "two darlings" who had bowed to Elizabeth? She did wait with patience, or rather she could hardly be said to wait at all, for every hour of every day had its allotted joy, till at last she ceased to care about "*those two young fellows*" at all.

No sooner was breakfast over every sunshiny morning, than either father or mother were told that they *must* come with her to the pier; and either father or mother obeyed, nothing loth, sharing with parental pride in her delight, as every eye followed her in her laughing, bounding, ringlet-shaking, ribbon-fluttering course.

"That's Dacre, mamma! Ain't he beautiful? He's major in the ——. The maid says he is going to be married, but I'll be hanged if I believe a word of it. He didn't ought to look that way at me, mamma, if he's going to be married, did he?" —may be quoted as one among a thousand speeches which proved the amiable tone of confidential familiarity which existed at this time between Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter, and it would be doing the fond mother injustice, were it not added, that all such outpourings of her young daughter's heart were welcomed with a sort of joyous sympathy, which fostered and strengthened every feeling they displayed.

Nor was Mr. Allen O'Donagough a whit less indulgent to his blooming heiress. Not, indeed, that she so frequently made him the confident of her military speculations as her mother; on the contrary, his presence generally acted in some degree as a check on her communications in this line: nevertheless, there were not wanting a multitude of occasions on which his affection, and her influence, were displayed. She made him subscribe to both the

principal libraries, because, as she said, "it was so abominably provoking to know that anybody that one particularly wanted to see was lounging at either, and not to be able to go in, and sit down for a little while, if one liked it." She repeatedly coaxed him to take places at the theatre for herself and her mamma, though he protested that the lamps made his head ache so much, that he could not stay with them; but this want of gallantry was fully atoned for, by his making acquaintance at the billiard-table with one lieutenant and two ensigns, whom he brought home to play whist, and eat lobster salad, twice in the course of the week; thereby putting the keystone to his daughter's triumphant felicity, by giving her the chance, every time she went out, that three officers in full uniform might turn round on meeting her and her mamma, and clank their swords upon the pavement beside them, for as many blessed moments as they could spare.

In short, Patty felt convinced that it was impossible to have a better father, and had the point been still unsettled, his conduct in a little scene which took place after they had been in Brighton about a week, would have put the matter quite out of doubt.

"Papa," said the lively girl one morning, as they amused themselves by standing together to watch the bathers, "Papa, you must let me bathe!"

"Bathe, Patty?" exclaimed Mr. O'Donagough in reply; "what on earth should you bathe for? Why you are the very picture of health, child, and a very pretty picture too, I must say. Better let well alone, Patty. The sea may tan your nice skin for what I know."

"Not it, papa!" cried Patty, snapping her fingers gaily in his face. "My skin will bear more than that before it is spoiled, I'll answer for it; and bathe I must, papa. Upon my word and honour I must! Now do just look at those heads bobbing up and down, and peeping round to look at each other. Isn't that capital fun now? Indeed, indeed, papa, you must let me bathe; and if you don't, I won't mind a single word you say about wearing shabby things out of sight, or anything else, for a month to come. You had better mind what I say at once, Pappy," added the young lady, mimicking her mamma's constant phrase when lecturing herself, and only substituting Pappy for Patty, at the end of it.

This last sally was more than the father could withstand; the mimicry was excellent, and his enjoyment of it so great, that he swayed himself backwards and forwards upon the sea-rail, over which he hung till his daughter seized the flaps of his coat to pull him back, lest he should fall over it.

"You little devil, you!" burst from him as soon as he could

recover his voice. "I should like to see the man that could say you nay. And so you must bathe, must you? And bob your handsome head up and down among the rest of 'em? And so you shall, saucy one, if you like it. Only it must not be above once a week, Miss Patty, remember that, for it comes deucéd dear, I promise you."

In short, in one way or another, the first week, and the second week wore pleasantly away, notwithstanding the absence of their great relations, and considerably before the expiration of the fortnight, Mrs. O'Donagough herself confessed, that much as she doted upon her darling Agnes, Brighton was a very delightful place, even though she was not there to enjoy it with her.

The daily increasing intimacy between Mr. O'Donagough and the sporting portion of the officers quartered in and near the town, had unquestionably much to do with this general family feeling that Brighton was the most agreeable place in the world; but about three days after the departure of the Huberts, another circumstance occurred which greatly enhanced their enjoyment of it.

In the same house with the O'Donagough family, occupying the front parlour as their sitting-room, lodged two young ladies, sisters, of an uncertain age, but of the most certain decorum and respectability. The windows of their parlour, commanding as they did the approach to the house-door, and a full unbroken view of the steps leading to it, enabled these young ladies to form a very just and accurate estimate of the number and quality of the guests who visited "the family in the drawing-room." "Tell me who are your friends, and I will tell you what you are," was a proverb, the recondite wisdom of which was familiar to the minds of both the sisters, and it would have been difficult to find an occasion on which it would have been more profitably applicable. A few days of diligent observation, followed by a clear-headed logical deduction of conclusions from premises, enabled the two Miss Perkinses to decide, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the O'Donagoughs were persons of high consideration, and the most unquestionable respectability. In the first place, the approach of General Hubert's stylish servant had been noted, commented upon, and duly estimated; and when the visit of the general himself and his lady followed, whose names and persons were as well known to the whole motley mass of Brighton elegance as those of royalty itself, the vicinity of such neighbours became matter of very serious importance indeed. Then quickly followed the information, on the unquestionable authority of the maid of the house, that they had all actually dined at General Hubert's, and were, moreover, very nearly related to him. After this intelligence reached

them, the excellent good sense of the Miss Perkinses decided that *a feeling of what they owed to themselves* rendered it absolutely necessary that they should in some way or other find means of becoming personally acquainted with the occupiers of the drawing-room apartment.

This matter was still in discussion between the two sisters, though more as to the feasibility of the object they had in view, than from any doubt as to the propriety of the measure, when it was observed by both the ladies, each from the window which she especially called her own, that several military gentlemen, of different ages, but all, as Miss Matilda observed, looking perfectly like men of fashion, were coming and going, both morning and evening, in a manner that gave every reason to believe they were on terms of great intimacy with the family they came to visit.

No one in any degree acquainted with the moral and social map of the ordinary existence of single ladies, "living on their means," and passing a season at Brighton, can doubt for a moment that this discovery very sharply pricked the sides of the Miss Perkinses' intent of becoming acquainted with Mrs. O'Donagough. In fact, it produced a sort of irritating intensity of purpose, especially in the mind of the youngest sister, which could hardly fail, sooner or later, of achieving its object.

"That is the *third* I have watched in and out to-day!" said Miss Matilda, in a voice that faltered from agitation, as Cornet Dartmore, of the —— dragoons, passed out upon the pavement.

"The third, is it? I have seen two," returned the less observant elder sister; and then, after a moment of reflection, she added, "Of course, Matilda, the O'Donagoughs must see a great deal of the military at General Hubert's, and in that way I dare say they will get acquainted with them all."

"Of course they do, Louisa. You don't suppose I was so stupid as to express any surprise at it—quite the contrary; for I am sure I should think it the most unnatural thing in the world if they did not. What I *was* thinking of, and what I very often *do* think of, Louisa, was that all the vulgar, commonplace nonsense people talk, about the disagreeableness of being an old maid, does not signify one single farthing. I, for one, despise it from the bottom of my heart. But what I know *does* signify, and in reality makes all the difference between being happy and miserable, is having the cleverness, good luck, or whatever it is, not to be left out of everything that is going on; and just to know gentlemen enough to speak to now and then, or to take a turn with one, like other people, if it was only for two or three minutes at a time."

"That is perfectly true, my dear," replied Miss Perkins, "and it is just like your good sense and right way of thinking to say it; and it certainly is very hard, when people are as reasonable as you are, that they should not have what they wish."

"I do think it is," said Matilda, with a gentle sigh; "and I give you my word and honour that, if I know my own heart, I should be perfectly contented and perfectly happy, if we could but get into a gay set of acquaintance. But *that* I do wish for, and I won't deny it."

"To be sure it would be a great blessing in every way!" replied the elder sister, with much feeling. "What a difference it would make every day of our lives! and of course, Matilda, you think about it still more than I do, and it is very natural you should, my dear. You are five years younger than I am, and that makes a great difference, particularly just at your age."

"Five years and three months," rejoined the younger. "My birthday is in September, almost the end, and yours in July, at the very beginning."

"Very true, my dear, so it is indeed. And besides, you happen to be so very remarkably young-looking, Matilda, that you look like a mere girl beside me. I am sure anybody in the world might take you for a dozen years younger than I am, at the very least, instead of five, or five and a quarter."

"I don't know about that, my dear Louisa," replied the younger sister, modestly. "I suppose I *do* look rather young, because everybody says so; and besides you don't make the most of yourself, and I am sure I wish you did; you would look as young again if you would but take a little pains about it. That is one great reason of the difference, for I won't deny that I do take a great deal of pains, and so I think one ought. In my opinion *one owes it to oneself*, and it is quite a duty not to neglect it."

After this there was a pause of some minutes, during which both sisters assiduously continued the needlework on which they were employed; but in fact their silence proceeded more from the crowding of their ideas than from any lack of them.

"What do *you* think would be the best way, Louisa?" pronounced in an accent half playful, half shy, by Miss Matilda, were the next words uttered.

"The best way to do what, my dear?" responded Miss Louisa, with a look of perfect and most genuine innocence; for in truth the mind of the elder sister had been occupied in meditation on the general question of oldmaidism, and not on that particular branch of it which concerned the officers who visited the family in the drawing-room.

"Don't you remember what we were talking about, sister?" said the younger, colouring a little, and somewhat in an accent of reproach.

"Yes, to be sure I do, my dear; about the foolishness of caring so overmuch about being married."

"No, no, I don't mean that, Louisa! we were talking of something quite different. I want you to say, sister, what you think would be the best and most lady-like way of making acquaintance with Mrs. O'Donagough. I am more and more convinced, the longer I think of it, that it ought to be done somehow or other. It is really too stupid sitting here like two fools, and speaking to nobody."

"Dear me! Think what a head I have got! If you will believe me, I didn't the least bit remember that we had been talking about that," replied the more resigned and tranquil-minded elder sister.

"Then I wish you *would* remember it, Louisa! It is excessively hard upon me to have everything left for me to manage. Do tell me, will you, at once, what you think would be the most advantageous way of beginning the acquaintance?"

"Upon my word, Matilda, that is no easy thing to say. People so highly connected, you must remember, are never so easy of access as those that are less distinguished; and though I don't mean to say that people in our situation of life, living as we do independently on our own fortunes, are not company for anybody, yet this family cannot be treated in the same way one might go to work with common ordinary ladies and gentlemen, like the Larkins last year at Hastings, you remember, or those dear, good-natured Thompsons at Worthing. But, to be sure, Matilda, it would be a very great thing for us both, and particularly for you, my dear. The place so full and all!"

"It would be just everything, Louisa! and one way or another it *must* be managed. That fine tall girl of theirs looks the very picture of good nature, and Hannah says she isn't the least bit proud in any way; chattering away with her about the officers, and everything else, in the kindest manner possible," replied Miss Matilda, eagerly. "I would give the world to know her!"

"Then suppose, my dear," replied the elder sister, "we were to try first with her? I have often observed that very young girls, and quite old gentlemen, are the easiest people to get acquainted with everywhere. Suppose, Matilda, we try speaking to the young lady first?"

"Stop a moment, will you! I will hear the rest presently," cried Miss Matilda, suddenly starting from the work-table, and hurrying out of the room.

Her sister looked up as the door closed sharply behind her,

with some degree of surprise; but being naturally of a composed temperament, she soon restored her attention wholly to the quilling of her *tulle*, nor ceased her occupation, twiddling it into becoming shape as a *tour de bonnet*, with rosebuds, ribbons, and so forth, till the entire fabric was complete. How long exactly this might have taken her she would have been at a loss to say; but when the work was ended, and had been tried on and approved, Miss Perkins began to wonder where sister Matty might be, chiefly because she wanted her to pass judgment on her performance, and confirm her own conviction that it was very pretty indeed.

Having looked at herself in the glass four several times, and out of the window upon the open sea as many, this sisterly longing was leading her towards the door, when she was stopped by hearing voices upon the stairs in gay, laughing, loud conversation, one of which was her sister's. Miss Perkins hesitated a moment whether she should open the door in order to discover who Miss Matilda's merry companion might be, and had just decided that it would be quite ridiculous *not* to do it, when the desired operation was performed from the other side, and Miss Matilda entered side by side with Miss Patty O'Donagough, both talking together, fast and loud, and apparently the very best friends in the world.

Miss Matilda Perkins bore in her hand a telescope, and the first words her sister distinctly heard and understood were, "Oh, my dear Miss O'Donagough, you must positively just come in and have a peep! You have no idea how exceedingly amusing it is, especially just now that it happens to be high water, with so many boats about and so many people bathing! This is Miss O'Donagough, sister—Miss Perkins, Miss O'Donagough. I was so lucky, Louisa, as just to meet this young lady as I came down from our room with the telescope, and I have just been so excessively amused by it up stairs, that, when I saw her look with curiosity at the instrument, I could not resist my inclination to ask her in to look through it. Is it not good-natured of her to come? So very kind and obliging!"

"I am very happy to see the young lady, I am sure, for that or any other reason," replied the elder sister, assiduously opening the window and fixing the telescope commodiously. "It is a very nice clear glass, Miss O'Donagough, and this window has got such a beautiful view! It is certainly very amusing."

"Now isn't that first-rate capital fun!" exclaimed Miss Patty, after a long steady gaze through the glass. "How I do envy you having such a beautiful amusement! You are looking through it all day long, ain't you, when you are not walking out?"

"We do use it a good deal, certainly," replied Miss Matilda,

with an expressive nod of the head; "but I do assure you, my dear Miss O'Donagough, that both my sister and myself shall always have the very greatest pleasure in giving it up to you, or your mamma either, if she would do us the favour to call in and use it."

"Oh! for that, mamma will never get it out of my hands, I promise you, whenever I get it into 'em. But it will be very good-natured of you, I am sure, if you will let me come and have a peep sometimes."

Both sisters were most earnest and eager in their assurances that there was nothing in the world they should like so well as seeing her come in and out fifty times a day, if she liked it.

"Well, then, I shall like it, you may depend upon it," replied Patty. "It will be such nice fun to gallop down here, whenever I am tired of the old ones up stairs. Hannah told me you were very free, pleasant sort of ladies, and so you are."

"I am sure, it is very kind of you to say so," replied Miss Perkins, simpering, "and it will be no sacrifice at all for me to give up the telescope, because, of course, you know, my dear, I don't think so much of all those little gay amusements as my sister does. I am so many, many years older than Matilda, that it makes a great difference in all things of that sort, you know. So she and you, my dear young lady, may take the glass, turn and turn about, whenever you are here, and that would be better almost than having it all to yourself, for that might make your eyes ache, which would be a pity, I am sure, so beautiful as they are."

Patty repaid this amiable prelude to lasting friendship by saying, as she again put the glass to her eye, "I am sure you are monstrous kind and good-natured, and so I shall tell mamma, and papa, too—and I shall make them both come and see you."

A happy and triumphant look was exchanged between the sisters, while one of Patty's bright eyes was glued to the instrument, which made it, as she said, almost as pleasant to live in a house, as upon the pier itself, and the other screwed up with skilful and most patient perseverance till she had carefully scanned every individual head within reach of her examination.

The acquaintance thus happily begun between the drawing-room and the parlour, progressed without the slightest drawback from the feelings of any single individual concerned; and many were the miles of hot walking spared Mrs. O'Donagough thereby, at the which she rejoiced not a little, for much as she loved to see and be seen, the excessive activity of her lively daughter, had already caused her to pant and to blow under all the brilliance of a September sun at Brighton, for more hours than were quite agreeable to her age and size, and it soon became an understood thing between the new associates, that the

Miss Perkinses should take care of Patty in all her long lounges backward and forward, over the cliff and under the cliff; while in return, Mrs. O'Donagough should *chaperon* them all, about three times a day to the libraries; by which arrangement, Miss Louisa got a great deal of very agreeable and improving conversation with Mrs. O'Donagough, and Miss Matilda very soon achieved a bowing and sometimes even a speaking acquaintance with all the gentlemen of Mr. O'Donagough's Brighton acquaintance. Their evening parties, too, were quite delightful. As the hours of daylight shortened, the hours for the card-table lengthened, and the company of the Miss Perkinses was agreeable in every way.

Nobody made tea for a party of gentlemen with so much skill, and so inexhaustible a stock of smiles as Miss Matilda; and no one was ever so well qualified to teach new stitches to waning eyes as Miss Louisa, who, still struggling against spectacles herself, had discovered or invented a prodigious number of devices by which "patterns" would do just as well a little awry, as not.

In this way, the fortnight of her "darling niece's" absence made itself wings; and when at length Mr. O'Donagough brought home the news that he had seen General Hubert on horseback, it was hailed by his lady with infinitely less ecstasy than he expected.

"You don't seem half so much out of your wits, my dear, as I expected," observed Mr. O'Donagough, laughing in high good-humour—the result, probably, of the propitious termination of his morning's amusement. "I thought you would begin singing and dancing when I told you that your beloved niece was come back!"

"Nonsense, Donny! my singing and dancing days are over; however, of course I am very glad, and I shall take Patty to call there to-morrow without fail. But the fact is, this place is so delightful—Patty is so much admired—the prawns and everything are so nice—those dear good Perkinses are such a comfort to me—and you are almost always in such high good-humour, that I am sure I don't want nieces or nephews, or anybody else, to make me happy here. However, of course I shall go and call to-morrow."

"Lor, mamma, I hope you will leave me behind if you do!" exclaimed Miss Patty. "I had rather take one walk with Matilda Perkins, old as she is, than a dozen with that prig in petticoats, Elizabeth Hubert."

"That's likely enough, darling," replied her mamma; "but if you are the sharp girl I take you for, you'll soon find that there's more reasons than one for making much of one's relations. You only just look at the Perkinses, Patty, when I

talk of *my niece*, Mrs. Hubert, before them, or at Dacre, or Willis, or Foxcroft, or any one of the officers, and you'll see fast enough whether they are worth calling upon or not."

"That's true as that the sun's in heaven, Patty," said her father, with great animation; "so keep a proper look-out girl, or you and I shall be two."

"La! what a fuss you are making!" said the young lady, tartly; "I never said I meant to cut 'em, did I? But I suppose I may think them fogrums and quizzes, if I choose?"

"I don't care what you may think 'em, my black-eyed beauty, if you do but take care to make the most of the cousinship," said her father. "So mind, miss, I shall question your mother about your behaviour to-morrow, and if I hear of sour looks, or impertinent airs of any kind, you shall not bathe again as long as you stay at Brighton. Just mind that."

Miss Patty tossed her head, but said no more; for she, as well as her mamma, had learned to know when her papa was in earnest.

It rarely happened but that when one parent admonished Miss O'Donagough, the other declared her to be peculiarly impeccable, and even praiseworthy on that particular point; but in the present instance the case was otherwise. Mrs. O'Donagough was equally edified and gratified by the sentiments expressed by her husband, and to atone for any seeming indifference manifested by her own manner of receiving the intelligence of her elegant niece's return, she took an opportunity, about an hour afterwards, when both the Miss Perkinses and Lieutenant Foxcroft were present, to make her joy and gladness appear with such eloquent vehemence, as elicited from all the most cordial congratulations on the event.

"You may well be proud of your niece, ma'am," said the lieutenant. "She's the first woman in Brighton, out and out."

"Ah! Captain Foxcroft," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, who generally gave brevet rank to all her military acquaintance, "beautiful as she is, that is her least merit I do assure you! Dear creature! I brought her up entirely myself, and, therefore, you know I may venture to speak for her mental qualities. To be sure I *did* take incessant pains with her! Every one of her accomplishments were of my own teaching, and I must say it, though I should not, that she has turned out exactly what I desired she should be."

"How very gratifying!" exclaimed Miss Perkins.

"And such an elegant creature, too!" subjoined Miss Matilda. "What a reward for all your care!"

"I must say," added Mrs. O'Donagough, looking with an expression of ingenuous modesty in the face of Lieutenant Foxcroft, "I must say that she had both precept and example to

help her, and I have the pleasure of knowing that the excellent match she made was entirely in consequence of my having fortunately attracted the attention of General Hubert—he was only Colonel Hubert then, but a most distinguished man in every way; and when he found that Agnes had been brought up by me, he immediately paid his addresses to her. Cannot you guess, my dear Miss Perkins, how gratifying the remembrance of this must be to my feelings while witnessing their present conjugal happiness?"

"Oh dear me! yes, I can indeed, Mrs. O'Donagough, and I hope and trust the same delightful thing will happen over again with your charming daughter."

"I am sure you are very kind," returned the gratified mother; "yes, that is exactly the sort of marriage I wish her to make—such high connections you know!—so every way desirable."

And here, while Mr. O'Donagough and the lieutenant sat down to a game of piquet, Mrs. O'Donagough lowered her voice to a confidential whisper, while she poured into Miss Perkins's ear numberless interesting little particulars relative to many of her own youthful adventures, among which the touching episode of Lord Mucklebury's sending her a set of shells, long after they were parted for ever, was not forgotten.

While this went on at one end of the room, on the sofa, Patty, by a movement of the finger, and a wink of the eye, invited Miss Matilda to station herself beside her, at a still open window at the other.

"Don't go on listening to mamma's prosing, Miss Matilda; there's no fun in that," said she, familiarly passing her arm through that of her new friend.

"What a dear girl you are," murmured Miss Matilda, in reply; "and how I do wish you would always call me *Matilda*, without any *Miss* at all before it."

"Do you?" replied Patty, laughing; "so I will then, for I like monstrously to be intimate with you, because you are such a capital one for fun. Don't those dear feathers look beautiful in the moonlight, marching along under the windows?"

"That they do indeed, Patty!" replied her friend, with a speaking pressure of the arm. "That's Captain Thwaites that's just past—he's reckoned the handsomest man in Brighton; but I think your cousin, General Hubert, is handsomer, though, to be sure, he is not quite so young."

"He handsome?—what that tall, thin, hideous, stiff old fellow? Oh, Matilda! if I could but show you *one* man, you'd never think any other handsome again—that is, not very, *very* handsome, as long as ever you lived."

"Indeed, Patty! and who is that, my dear?"

"Hush! Don't speak loud? But if I am to call you Matilda, and we are to be out and out real friends, I don't think it would be at all right for me not to tell you everything. For real particular friends, you know, never have any secrets from one another."

"Dear creature!" exclaimed Miss Matilda, in a whisper, with another affectionate pressure of the arm, "tell me everything then."

"And you will never say a word about it to mamma, nor to your sister either?"

"No, not for the world, my dearest Patty."

"Let us lean out of the window then," said Miss O'Donagough, "and I will tell you the history of the only real lover I ever had, that was worth talking about."

With arms still interlaced, and heads projected, as if gazing on the beautiful effects of the moonbeams on the sea, the two friends there stood together till Patty had poured forth the whole history of Jack's tender attentions during the whole voyage from Sydney; his escape from drowning—his recovery from death on her lap; and lastly, the parting kiss, by which, as she said, she well knew he meant to pledge his troth to her for life.

"But my darling girl, do you mean that he was a common sailor?" demanded the confidant, in an accent of considerable surprise.

"A common sailor, indeed!—Good gracious!—no, Matilda. Before he went on shore mamma found out that he was certainly somebody of very great consequence in disguise."

"Good heavens! my dear, you don't say so? What a complete adventure? And you so young too! Oh, you lucky girl!"

"Ain't I, Matilda? But when shall I see him again, dear? Do you think he will ever come to look for me?"

"You may depend upon it, Patty," &c., &c.

* * * *

And so the conversation went on, deepening in its tone of affectionate confidence, till two or three more officers came into the room, and then Miss Matilda was summoned to her well-loved place at the tea-table. But this did not happen till a very broad and lasting foundation of friendship had been laid between Miss Matilda Perkins and Miss Martha O'Donagough—a friendship which was not without a lasting influence on the happiness of both.

## CHAPTER XV.

"HERE'S aunt Betsy!—here's aunt Betsy!" burst from the little Emily, as she stood at the drawing-room windows the day after General Hubert, his wife, and daughter, returned to Brighton; and the words were accompanied with such gay clapping of the hands, and such joyous skippings and boundings, as left no doubt of the sort of welcome the great-great-aunt was likely to receive.

"She is come, indeed, mamma!" cried Elizabeth, throwing aside the book she was reading, and exhibiting very nearly as much childish glee as her younger sister. "May I run down to meet her?"

"No, no, Elizabeth, let me go first and take her into the parlour," replied Mrs. Hubert; "she may be tired by her journey, dear, and may wish to be a little quiet at first."

"Mamma! mamma! Compton is come too! Compton is handing aunt Betsy out!" cried Emily, who still kept her post at the window. This was intelligence that seemed naturally and of necessity to break down all restraints, whether of ceremony or prudence, and mother and daughters very nearly vied with each other in the velocity with which they descended the stairs. The old lady and her young attendant were, however, in the hall by the time they reached it; and the presence of the young man proved to be of considerable utility, occupying his two sisters so completely for a minute or two, as to give Mrs. Hubert the power of leading her venerable aunt quietly to an arm-chair in the parlour, and hearing her declare that she had enjoyed the journey exceedingly, and was all the better for it. Mrs. Elizabeth Compton, as she was of course called by all the world, save the Hubert family, was at this time somewhat past seventy; but never was the allotted three score years and ten borne with less consciousness of their weight than by this fragile-looking little spinster. She was as thin as it was well possible to be, her delicate little hand literally permitting light to be visible athwart its slight integuments; but all there was of her seemed imperishable; hardly partaking of the materials on which the wear and tear of time takes hold, and with an unquenched spirit in her eye that shot forth the same intellectual vigour it had ever done.

"My dearest aunt!" cried Mrs. Hubert, fondly hanging over her, and looking into the cheerful face that smiled upon her, with truly filial affection,—"my dearest aunt, how delightful it is to see you thus so completely yourself, so perfectly well and unwearied, after your long journey."

"No very long journey, dearest Agnes! You see how I am accompanied—and I suppose you guess that I arrived in London the day before yesterday, and waited till my application to the Stephensons to run away with my young squire, from their river abode at Richmond to your marine abode here, could be forwarded and granted. Do you think the general will be very angry with me for stealing a week or two from the mathematics?"

"Not past forgiveness, aunt Betsy!" replied Mrs. Hubert, now stepping towards the door by which her son was entering, and offering, with successful rivalry, a mother's arms to draw him from those of his sister's, which still encompassed him.

"Is he not grown, mamma?" said Elizabeth. "Did you ever see anything so tall?"

"Rarely at sixteen, minus four months," replied his mother, looking at him with irresistible admiration. "I only hope he does not mean to grow any taller."

"I shall not answer that till I have measured myself with my father," said the boy, drawing himself up, and exhibiting as fine a face and person as nature ever bestowed. "My intention is to be exactly as tall as General Hubert; for, as it is my full purpose and resolution to be a General Hubert myself, I really think the best thing I can do is to take him for my model. But do not talk of *my* being tall, Elizabeth is a perfect giantess! Thank Heaven! however, I do not think she is quite so ugly as she was—what do you think about it, aunt Betsy?"

* * * *

Altogether there never was a happier family-meeting, every heart was overflowing with love and joy; and had it not been that the recollection of the O'Donagough family once or twice mantled the cheeks of Agnes with a blush which the old lady saw, but could by no means understand, every one of the little party might have been said to be in a state of perfect enjoyment.

In about an hour after Mrs. Compton's arrival, and when she was comfortably installed in the drawing-room, General Hubert returned from his ride, and again all the pleasure of the meeting was renewed. He was almost as fond of the eccentric old lady as Agnes herself, and felt a degree of pleasure from her society, and from the whimsical, but shrewd spirit of her conversation, which is rarely communicated by persons of her age. But in the midst of their lively talk, there were moments when the brave general looked almost as embarrassed as his fair lady, upon recollecting the nature of the *family news* he had undertaken to communicate, and not even the sight of his noble-looking boy, whom he had not seen since he left him at Sand-

hurst some months before, could drive Mrs. O'Donagough and her family from his head for ten minutes together. At length, suddenly coming to the conviction, like Macbeth, that—

> If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
> It were done quickly.

He stopped his son Compton short in a very animated description, which he was addressing to his mother and sisters, of a royal review of which he had been recently a spectator, and saying, laughingly, "Aides-de-camp—chargers—dukes—marquises—firing and charging!

"Mercy on me, Compton! you are like a magazine of powder in the very act of ignition. Do explode, for the especial advantage of Elizabeth and Emily, in the dining-room, will you? —for I really want to converse a little with your aunt."

The gay young trio started up, and made their exit, while the face of their mother, who perfectly comprehended the motive of the manœuvre, instantly became of a very bright "celestial rosy red," and she had actually the cowardice to walk to the other end of the room for her work-box, in order to have something on which to fix her eyes, that she might avoid the danger of encountering those of aunt Betsy.

"He-hem!" said the general.

"Are you going to work, dear Agnes?" said the old lady. "Don't go to work yet, love! I have not looked at you half enough."

"My dear aunt!" began the general, and paused.

"My dear general!" returned the old lady, gaily, with her head a little on one side, and her bright eyes twinkling in his face, with a look of exceeding pleasure; for there was nothing she liked better than to be called "aunt" by General Hubert.

"My dear aunt, we have some news to tell you," he resumed; "and I am sorry to say that I am not quite sure you will like them."

"Indeed! what can that be, I wonder? Montague is not ill, is he? I have seen all the rest of you—pooh! nonsense, general!—tell us your news, I do assure you I am not in the least afraid to hear them."

"Aunt Betsy!—Mrs. O'Donagough and her family are come to England."

A most perfect silence, which lasted at least two minutes, followed this announcement, and then the old lady said, in a sort of lively tone, peculiar to herself, quite indescribable, but exceedingly expressive of a little internal *méchanceté*—"Mrs. O'Donagough and her family arrived in England? Well, General Hubert!—I really cannot conceive why you should imagine this news would not be agreeable to me. All persons, I believe,

rather like to have their prophecies come true. Remember what that keen observer the Dean of St. Patrick said,

> He'd rather that his friend should die
> Than his prediction prove a lie.

"Then why, my dear sir, should you entertain any doubt of my heartfelt participation of your joy on this occasion. Look up, my dear Mrs. Hubert!—never mind your carpet-work for a few minutes. Let me wish you joy, my dear. You are now about to reap the reward of all your unwearied and unceasing attentions to these amiable relatives! How you must enjoy the idea of it! And the general, too—just as his young family are growing up. What an advantage for them. Elizabeth in particular. I should think the young ladies must be nearly of the same age, and I cannot doubt that my niece, your aunt, Mrs. O'Donagough, formerly the widow Barnaby, keeping in mind the many proofs of affectionate remembrance which you have bestowed on her during the whole period of her absence, will indulge Miss Hubert with her daughter's company both in town and country as much as you could possibly desire. I really wish you, heartily, joy of this most happy family re-union. It is, as indeed you well know, no more than I was quite sure would happen; but as you never appeared to agree with me in this opinion, the circumstance must come upon you with all the additional delight of being unexpected.—I wish you joy, General Hubert, heartily."

General Hubert looked half angry at some parts of this harangue; but before it was ended he had perfectly recovered his good-humour, and said with a laugh, that was at least half genuine,

"Come, come, aunt Betsy. As you are great, be merciful—you certainly appear to have seen further into futurity, than either Agnes or myself—I freely confess that I never thought these good people would return to England, and I will freely confess, also, that I should have been quite as well pleased if they had not. But jesting apart, their arrival cannot in reality be matter of any very serious uneasiness to us, and I confess I feel not in the least degree doubtful but that I shall be able to guard my stronghold, wife, daughter, and all, against all the attacks which the O'Donagough faction may be able to bring against it."

The flexible and speaking features of the little old lady's expressive face changed, as she listened to these words, from a sort of *gaieté maligne* to a look of lamb-like gentleness and submission.

"Oh! dear me, General Hubert. How can you for a moment suppose I doubt it. Don't mind me, or anything I say. It is

only my foolish joking way, you know. I should behave better if you had not all, young and old, conspired to spoil me. But do not fancy for a moment that I am not aware of the utter impossibility that you should blunder in any way."

Agnes looked up at her aunt from the corner of her eye, and shook her head, though almost imperceptibly, as she listened to her; but the unsuspicious general walked across the room to the venerable mystifier, and taking her hand, replied, "Thank you, dear madam, for your confidence in me. Even Agnes must know by this time that it is impossible to pass through life without finding ourselves occasionally obliged to associate with persons extremely far from agreeable; and the great secret I believe is, to learn how this may be done without jostling against them."

"I dare say it is," said Mrs. Compton, in the same gentle tone; "and you must have had so much experience in the course of your varied and busy career, that it cannot be doubted but you must understand this better than most people—at any rate, better than a poor old recluse like me."

"Perhaps I do know something about such mysteries," replied General Hubert, smiling, and dropping into a chair close beside the old lady; "and therefore I flatter myself that you will let me keep watch and ward over you all, and guard you from all social perils, let them come in what shape they may."

"Happy are those so guarded," responded Mrs. Elizabeth Compton, solemnly.

Here again Mrs. Hubert looked into the face of her aunt; but this time she did not shake her head, appearing on the contrary well satisfied at its expression, and looking herself more comfortable and at her ease than she had done since the discussion began.

"Perhaps," said General Hubert, now fearlessly resuming the theme,—"perhaps, under any other circumstances, I should be disposed to shake off the acquaintance of this O'Donagough family altogether, and so get rid of the inconvenience as you would do, my dear lady, at once. But I confess, after our long correspondence, it strikes me that there would be something very pusillanimous in this, and that it would look vastly as if we were conscious of not having tact and *savoir faire* enough to take care of ourselves."

"'A soldier, and afraid?'" cried Mrs. Compton, briskly. "Nay, then, my dear general, if such be your feeling, who can wonder at your scorning what none but an old woman, perhaps, would deem the better part of valour? But tell me, dears, in what part of England do our recovered relatives take up their abode?"

General Hubert and his wife exchanged a furtive glance;

but the gentleman answered boldly, "I really do not know, dear aunt, where they mean to live; but at this moment, I believe, they are at Brighton."

The old lady was engaged in neatly folding a silk scarf she had taken from her shoulders; but, on hearing these words, she stopped short in the middle of the operation, and remained for about a minute as still as if she had been shot; and then, having taken rather a long breath, she resumed her employment, and pronounced very tranquilly the monosyllable, "Oh!"

It was precisely at this moment that a servant entered the drawing-room, and putting a visiting-card into the hands of Mrs. Hubert, said, "Are you at home, ma'am?"

This discreet individual was the old butler, who, although he had received no orders to deny his mistress, felt doubtful whether the recent arrival of Mrs. Compton might not render the admission of company inconvenient.

Mrs. Hubert changed colour as her eye glanced upon the card.

"Who is it, Agnes?" inquired the general. But Agnes, instead of answering, gave back the card to the servant with a silent movement of the head, which indicated that it was to be handed to his master.

There could hardly be a greater proof of the high consideration in which Mrs. Compton was held, than that General Hubert coloured also as he read the same; but he rallied instantly, and said, "This is Mrs. O'Donagough's card, my dear madam. Perhaps we had better send down word that we are engaged? You are too recently arrived to wish for company."

"Decline seeing Mrs. O'Donagough on my account, General Hubert!" said the old lady, with a smile of ineffable sweetness. "Oh! no—I would set off for Compton Basset again instantly, if I believed such a thing possible. I do assure you I shall be delighted to see her. I consider her coming just now as peculiarly fortunate."

"Desire Mrs. O'Donagough to walk up," said the general.

"This is quite an unexpected pleasure," said Mrs. Compton, turning towards Agnes. "I assure you I feel quite curious to see her." This was said so naturally, and, moreover, it appeared so very likely that the old lady might feel curious to see her travelled niece, that Mrs. Hubert was perfectly restored to composure by the assurance, and rose to receive her aunt and cousin with as little repugnance as if she had been alone.

This entire composure was, however, a little shaken by the ardour of Mrs. O'Donagough's approach, who rushed forward with the same warmth of rapture that marked the first interview with her beloved Agnes upon her arrival; and it required very considerable self-command on the part of Mrs. Hubert to

Dr. Donagough's magnificent behaviour to Aunt Compton

endure without wincing the long, close hug bestowed upon her, conscious the while that aunt Betsy's eye was fixed upon her and the capacious mass by which she was enveloped. At length, however, she was released; and then, with the sweet, gentle gracefulness which could not forsake her, even when withdrawing from the arms of Mrs. O'Donagough, she said, "Give me leave, Mrs. O'Donagough, to introduce you to our aunt Compton. It is so many years since you met, that it is probable neither would now recollect the other."

Mrs. O'Donagough started a little, but immediately put herself in an attitude of great dignity, while, probably to the astonishment of all parties, Mrs. Compton rose from her chair, and placing her hands before her, made the lowest possible courtesy, saying, as she did so, with a most courteous smile, "You wrong my memory, niece Agnes; and, as I should surmise, that of Mrs. Barnaby O'Donagough also. We are neither of us cast in moulds so common as to be easily forgotten. For myself, at least, I can declare, with all sincerity, that I should have recognised this lady as the daughter of Miss Martha Disett in any part of the world."

"Well, ma'am, and I believe I can say as much for you," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, ceremoniously returning the courtesy.

"You should have known me for Miss Martha Disett's daughter!" retorted the old lady, in her gayest voice.

"No, ma'am, certainly not," replied the swelling Mrs. O'Donagough, filling a good-sized sofa with her presence as she spoke. I could hardly have mistaken you for my mother's daughter, I think. But I should have known you for my father's sister anywhere."

"I thought so, I thought so. And pray, is this beautiful young lady your daughter, ma'am?" said the whimsical spinster, fixing her looks upon Patty with a mixed expression of wonder and admiration.

Mrs. O'Donagough looked for a moment as if she did not quite know what she would be at; but her internal conviction of Patty's extreme beauty, and the indisputable glory of maternity which she knew attached to herself, and which now, for the first time, was displayed before the (of course) envious eyes of her old aunt, speedily restored her complacency, and she replied with an air that perfectly enchanted the old lady, "Yes, ma'am, this young lady is my daughter, Miss Martha O'Donagough; as remarkable, I beg to assure you, for the accomplishments of her mind, as for the beauty of her person. Though I bring her up with the very greatest care, to prevent anything like vanity entering her head, I don't scruple to allow that she is handsome before her face—because she well knows that hand-

some is as handsome does. Her excellent father, who is one of the best and most thoroughly gentleman-like men in the world, has always taught her to understand that beauty is of no consequence whatever in comparison to good behaviour."

"What a treasure she must be!" cried Mrs. Compton, gently but fervently; "and so beautifully dressed too! It is easy to perceive, Mrs. Barnaby—O'Donagough I mean—that she is a young lady of great fortune."

"Yes, ma'am, thank God! The days are gone and over with me when I wanted anybody's help—Mr. O'Donagough *is* a man of fortune, and in every way a gentleman."

"Indeed, ma'am, it seems to me that you are the most fortunate lady in the world," said Mrs. Compton, gravely.

"And so I am, ma'am, and no thanks, I must say, to anybody but my own good conduct and knowledge how to conduct myself. However, I am willing, if other people are, to let bygones be bygones—and only to remember that my relations *are* my relations, without raking up any disagreeable old stories about what's past."

"I am sure, Mrs. O'Donagough," replied the old lady, in what might be almost called a voice of contrition,—"I am sure we must all be very wicked people indeed, if we returned such generosity on your part with ingratitude. I am grown older, and I hope wiser than I was, Mrs. O'Donagough, when I saw you last, and I hope my conduct will give proof of it."

"Well, ma'am, it is never too late to mend," replied the large lady, bestowing a sort of encouraging nod upon the little one, whose figure, by comparison, hardly seemed to exceed the proportions of a fairy; "I dare say we shall get on very well together. And as you took such a fancy to my niece Agnes, because she was pretty, it's likely enough you may do the same by my daughter; and if you do, you will find her everything that a gentleman's daughter ought to be,—and as good and civil to you as if you were as handsome, and smart, and young as herself. Go over, Patty, and kiss your aunt Compton."

The young lady rose, and so did the old lady also; but no one, save Mrs. Hubert, in the least degree comprehended her feelings.

"No, no, young lady!" she said, waving her off with her hand, and walking with a quick step towards the door as she spoke. "No, no, no! I know better than to let the kisses of a young beauty be wasted on a little hunchbacked old woman like me! You must let me look at you, and admire you, which I am sure I shall do without ceasing. But as to kissing—no, no, no!—the young lady knows better than that."

With these words she slipped out of the room, and took refuge in one on the same floor, to which she had been already introduced as her own.

"What a funny old woman!" cried Miss Patty, a little before the door was closed after her.

"Hold your tongue, child!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, rather *sotto voce;* "as we have made up all our old quarrels so well, I shan't let you put your own nose out of joint by any pertness, remember that. How wonderfully well the old lady takes care of herself!" continued Mrs. O'Donagough, addressing Mrs. Hubert; "I declare I think she looks better than ever she did in her life. By-the-by, my dear Agnes, what was all that stuff she told us, about her being as rich as a Jew? Don't you remember? I suppose it was all a joke, wasn't it?"

"Mrs. Compton is too generous to be very rich," replied Mrs. Hubert, gravely.

"What, she still gives away all her little substance to beggars, does she? She need not have lived like a toad in a hole in her own farm-house as she did, if she hadn't turned her back on her own relations, and given all she had to make herself a name among the poor. Your wife comes of a very good family, General Hubert, little as that queer old soul may make you think so."

"I am fully aware, Mrs. O'Donagough, of Mrs. Elizabeth Compton's claims to respect in every way," replied General Hubert with some stateliness.

"Oh! dear me! I did'nt mean to doubt it, sir—I know too well what a gentleman is, to have any question of it. My own Mr. O'Donagough will, I am quite sure, conduct himself towards her exactly upon the same principle. But it is quite right, nevertheless, for the credit of the family, that you should both of you know that, notwithstanding her unaccountable queer looks and ways, she is a born gentlewoman."

"Believe me, madam, I have never doubted it," replied General Hubert, rising as if to leave the room.

"Will you excuse me, aunt," said Agnes, rising also, "if I leave you now to go to Mrs. Compton? She is but just arrived from town, and may require some attention after her journey."

"To be sure, my dear, you are quite right. I never preach what I don't practise. Let us all be attentive to the poor old soul. I am sure, if she behaves but decent, I don't want ever to quarrel with her again. Come along, Patty. We shall find our party at the library, I suppose. I hope, my dear Agnes, that you, and the general, and Elizabeth, will all give us the pleasure of your company to tea and a sandwich some evening. Aunt Betsy seems so mighty brisk, that perhaps she may come too; and I'll engage my word for it that Mr. O'Donagough will receive her with every politeness."

Mrs. Hubert coloured, faltered, and finally turned an imploring look upon her husband, which he rightly interpreted

into a petition that he would reply to Mrs. O'Donagough's invitation.

"You are very kind, Mrs. O'Donagough," said he, stepping forward; "but when Mrs. Elizabeth Compton is with us, we never answer for ourselves."

"My goodness!" exclaimed she, with unfeigned surprise, "that *is* treating her with respect! But I suppose you have some reason for it. Upon my word, however, I would not engage to say that Mr. O'Donagough would go quite that length if ever she comes to stay with us. However, if you have really cockered her up to that pass, general, I suppose I must send a written invitation in proper style, and then you may consult her and let me have a regular written answer. I shouldn't wonder if the old lady was to feel a little curiosity to see what sort of style we live in. She'll find a difference, Agnes, I can tell her, from the time when you and I first broiled over to Compton Basset, and found her stuck up in the middle of her bees. Do you remember?"

"Perfectly," replied Mrs. Hubert.

"He! he! he! What an old frump she was to me! Do you remember?—But never mind! I have promised the poor old soul that bygones should be bygones, and so they shall for me. Come, Patty."

* * * *

For a minute or two after Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter had left the room, General and Mrs. Hubert remained looking at each other in silence. At length Agnes said, "This will never do, Montague! We really must not let them meet again. It is impossible Mrs. O'Donagough should long remain insensible to the bitter quizzing aunt Betsy is pouring upon her."

"I do request, my dearest Agnes," replied the general, "that you will let things take their course. I have little doubt but that aunt Betsy will manage her gibes and her jestings too discreetly and too skilfully for any mischief to come; and even should the two ladies quarrel outright, it would be a matter of no great consequence. But the fact is, Agnes, that aunt Betsy's quizzings are rather directed against me than Mrs. O'Donagough. I understand her perfectly, dear whimsical little old soul, and, *entre nous*, I am quite determined to overthrow her tactics. She wants to prove that we have acted very unwisely in neglecting her advice when she recommended us not to answer Mrs. O'Donagough's first letter from Australia; and I am determined to show her that I really know how to take care of myself and you too, even though the redoubted Barnaby, daughter, husband, and all, have had their claim to kindred fearlessly admitted."

Agnes smiled.

"So then," said she, "the business afoot is nothing less than a sharp encounter between the wits of General Hubert and Mrs. Elizabeth Compton. *Eh bien! Faites votre jeu*, my husband! As it is utterly and altogether impossible that Mrs. O'Donagough should ever trouble my spirit more, except by troubling yours, I shall sit by and watch your manœuvres as composedly as if you were performing a comedy expressly for my amusement. Neither am I in the least afraid of trusting my beloved aunt Betsy in your hands—though I suspect you mean to plague her a little—don't you?"

"A little, perhaps," replied the general, laughing, "and upon my word she deserves it. She really seems to suppose that I and my race are in danger of being blighted and disgraced for evermore, by the overpowering influence of these Australian cousins. Don't you think she overrates their importance a little, Agnes?"

"Why, yes, I hope she does. But, indeed, Montague, if she goes on in the complimentary strain with them, I cannot answer for my gravity. The surprised stare of the young lady's enormous black eyes, and the comical struggle between gratified vanity and suspicious mistrust in the countenance of my aunt Barnaby are almost irresistible. What will you say to me if I laugh outright? And how on earth are we to keep Compton in order? You know aunt Betsy is in all things considerably too much inclined to charter the vehement exuberance of his saucy animal spirits, and I fear, that if he should perchance take it into his head to amuse himself at the expense of my exotic relatives, she will hail him as an ally a great deal too joyfully. Upon my word, Montague, I think we should do very wisely if we moved our sea-quarters to East-Bourne or Hastings."

"And upon my word, Agnes, I am more nearly angry with you for saying so, than I ever was in my life before. Should you really think it wise and reasonable if I were to permit myself and my household to be driven round the country from terror of what the O'Donagough family could do to us? Come, come, Agnes! This craven proposal only proceeds from a little covert inclination to take part with aunt Betsy against me—is it not so?"

"I don't know—I assure you, Montague, I think we shall get into a scrape while you and aunt Betsy are running this tilt together."

"Fear nothing, dearest—for I only mean to prove to the mischievous old lady, that notwithstanding all her predictions, we have run into no danger whatever."

"Well, then, I trust that you will soon succeed, and that the joke will be safely over. But I have staid too long from her.

Do you think I had better say anything to her about Mrs. O'Donagough, or let the subject drop?"

"Decidedly say nothing about them, unless she leads to it herself, and I entreat, if she does this, and perseveres in the same tone of *persiflage*, that you will 'fool her to the top of her bent,' and appear to understand everything she says literally."

"This will be no easy task, Montague, if she pushes the joke much further. However, 'I will in all my best obey you, sir;' and trust that the influence of my name may enable me to enact the *vrai Agnes* to your satisfaction."

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While this conversation took place at one end of the Marine-parade, Mrs. O'Donagough pursued her way in excellent spirits to the other. Miss Patty, who had scarcely ever heard the obnoxious name of aunt Betsy mentioned in her life, had now to listen to a great many very deep and shrewd observations concerning her.

"It is no little matter we have done to-day, Patty, I can tell you that," said Mrs. O'Donagough, with an accent, which to the young lady seemed rather mysterious in its solemnity. "Some people say that that little crooked old woman is immensely rich; if she is—but that's neither here nor there—I won't pretend even to give an opinion upon it,—only this much I will say, that it is perfectly and altogether beyond the reach of belief that General Hubert should let his wife make such a fuss about her if she is not."

"She looks as if she had been buried fifty years and dug up again," observed the young lady.

"That's a monstrous good description of her, Patty. But don't you let your wit outrun your discretion, darling. If she has scraped and hoarded up some money from what ought to have belonged to my poor dear father and nobody else, there is no reason under the sun why it shouldn't every farthing come to you. Everybody that ever heard of her knows that she is the most capricious old soul alive, first taking a fancy to one person and then to another. All of a sudden, once, for no reason in the world that anybody could find out, she took it into her head to spend nobody knows how much money in dressing your cousin Agnes from top to toe, and sending her off, miles and miles from home, to a fine school. And to my certain knowledge, she had never seen the child above once or twice before. I was by when she took the fancy into her head, and I am as sure as sure that it was for no other reason in the world than just because the girl looked pretty when she took off her bonnet and shook back her curls. I remember the stare she gave her, as well as if it was but yesterday. And d'ye think, Patty, I didn't see the stare she gave you to-day? Agnes

Willoughby was no more to be compared to you at the time I speak of, than chalk to cheese, and I do believe in the bottom of my heart, that, if we have but wit enough to flatter her up a little and manage to put you forward well, you will have a better chance now than any of 'em."

"Well, mamma," replied Patty, yawning, "all I have got to say is, that if the old mummy has got some tin to give, I wish she'd come down with it at once, for I want to have a black silk cloak, trimmed with lace like Matilda Perkins's; and if I don't get what she has hoarded soon I shan't care a farthing about it at all, for I'm sure, when I'm married, I shall expect my husband to shovel out the money whenever I may happen to want it."

"Nonsense, Patty! don't talk so like an idiot," replied her mother. "You are old enough to know better; or if you ain't, I'm sure, you have no business with a black silk cloak trimmed with lace. How do you think, child, that you are to get this fine rich husband that is to shovel out such loads of money upon you? I should think you might know without my telling you, that a girl's chance of a good match is doubled and trebled a hundred thousand times over by her having some money herself."

"Money enough to buy nice things and set her beauty off, of course she ought to have, and it's a sin and shame if she has not," replied Patty; "but I don't see what she wants of anything more, if she's handsome."

"Why, then you are not half such a clever girl as I took you for, Miss Martha. Take my word for it, that there is no man but what likes to get money with his wife, if he can catch it."

"You don't mean to say, mamma," cried the young lady, colouring as red as scarlet, "you don't mean to say that such a girl as I am ought to be married for her money?"

"Lor a mercy, Patty, what a pepper-box you are! I never said any such thing, you little fool," replied her mother, laughing. "You need not be in such a fright. Nobody can know the value of fine eyes better than I do; my time is not so long gone by, I can tell you, but what I can remember what they are worth. But that's neither here nor there, Patty; the fact is, you must be civil and attentive to this crabbed old lady, and when your father hears what I shall tell him about her, he'll be sharp enough in looking after your behaviour, I'll engage for it."

"Then let him give me a black silk cloak," said Patty; "I'll be hanged if I plague myself to be civil to that little old witch for nothing."

By this time they had reached their own lodgings, and it

was with great satisfaction that Mrs. O'Donagough found her husband in solitary possession of the drawing-room, for her mind was full of important matter, and telling Patty that she had better go and call on the Perkinses, she seated herself exactly opposite to her spouse, and informed him of the unexpected interview she had had with her old aunt. She recounted at length the history of the perfect reconciliation which had taken place between them—described the old lady's evident and frankly-expressed admiration for Patty—related the rumours which had reached her before she quitted England, concerning her aunt's accumulated wealth—and finally expressed her conviction that the best and wisest thing they could do, would be to cultivate the acquaintance of the old lady most assiduously.

"I shall say the same, my Barnaby," replied Mr. Allen O'Donagough, "if I can find out that you are right about the old queen's cash. But you don't seem over clear upon that point, and I have too much promising business upon my hands already, to waste time in running after moonshine. I wonder how the old lady came, whether she staged it, or posted? You did not happen to hear, did you?"

"No, Donny, I did not," replied his wife; "but it would be a capital thing to find out, wouldn't it? It would be as good as a peep into her strong box."

Mr. Allen O'Donagough did not answer, but sat musingly swinging one leg over the arm of his chair for a minute or more, then suddenly starting up, he said, "Let me find you here when I come back, Barnaby; I shall not be long."

Had time been allowed, the lady might have questioned him as to his purpose, but there was not; for before she could say "Stay!" he was out of the room, and in the next moment she heard the house door close after him.

Though still unrecognised by any former acquaintance, Mr. Allen O'Donagough had fully renewed his intimacy with all the holes and corners, terrestrial and aquatic, with which Brighton, in common with all other watering-places, abounds. To one of them he now made his way, and beckoning to him one of the satellites whom he knew as ever ready to do his bidding for sixpence, he instructed him to repair to the house of General Hubert, and inquire of the domestic who should answer the bell, if he could be so obliging as to tell him where Mrs. Elizabeth Compton's carriage put up.

In less than five minutes after Mr. O'Donagough had pointed out the general's mansion to his agent, the fellow returned to him at his station, in an obscure street close by, and told him that the lady's carriage was at the Wellington Arms. Having honourably paid the promised sixpence, Mr. O'Donagough proceeded to the stables indicated, and there had not only the

satisfaction of seeing Mrs. Elizabeth Compton's handsome travelling carriage, but also a most respectable-looking domestic, who stood by, evidently to superintend the various cleaning operations that it was undergoing within and without.

Mr. O'Donagough approached and fixed his eye on the lozenge with an air of an experienced herald.

"This is Mrs. Elizabeth's Compton's carriage, sir, is it not?" said he, civilly addressing the servant.

"Yes, sir," replied the man, touching his hat.

"I hope she is quite well?"

"Quite well, sir, thank you."

"She must be getting old now, good lady. Did she come down post all the way from London to-day?"

"Yes, sir; my mistress travels wonderfully well still. She came post from Exeter to London the other day, without stopping above an hour on the road."

"That is capital, indeed! Good morning."

* * * * *

"Yes, my Barnaby, the game is worth following. Her own carriage—post all the way from Exeter, and a servant that looks as if he might belong to a duke," said Mr. O'Donagough, re-entering his drawing-room, and reseating himself in the chair he had left about forty minutes before.

"Bless my soul! you don't say so!" exclaimed his wife in return. "What a sly old miser she must have been for years and years, to be sure! But no matter for that, Donny—no matter how the money was scraped together, so as our Patty does but get hold of it. If she does but get half, it would be well worth having, you know. Her own carriage—just think!—post all the way from Exeter. Her own servant—think for a moment, my dear, whether the half of that would not be worth having! and remember, that if she was to die to-morrow, we have just exactly as good a right to it as the Huberts. My Patty, you know, is precisely the self-same relation to her as Agnes. Don't you see?"

"Yes, my dear, I see," replied Mr. Allen O'Donagough; "and a very pretty little sight it is, there's no doubt about that. All you have got to do is, to keep it in view, and come in at the death if you can."

"Then I will immediately write an invitation to them all to spend the evening here on Wednesday next," said Mrs. O'Donagough.

"Do, my dear," replied her spouse: "and if they come, I assure you I shall think very well of your chance."

Mrs. O'Donagough only gave an intelligent nod in reply, and seating herself at the table, immediately composed the following note:—

"My dearest Agnes,

"I cannot describe to you the pleasure it has given me to see my dear father's own sister again once more, and that, too, in a manner so much more agreeable than upon any former occasion. Thank Providence! my circumstances are such, that I shall never want to be troublesome to her any more in any way; and this must, of course, be a relief to her mind, dear old lady. Will you, my dearest Agnes, have the kindness to present my most dutiful respects to her, and tell her that I should consider it as the very greatest honour and favour if she would come with you, and the general, and our dear Elizabeth, to pass the evening with us on Wednesday next. I think that, if possible, our sea view is more beautiful than yours. At least Patty says, that at high-water it beats all the rest of Brighton. Poor dear girl!—she is positively longing to see her great-aunt again! She has been telling her papa that she never in her whole life saw any old lady that she so much admired, and felt so much inclined to love. Do, my dear Agnes—my own dear sister's only child!—do exert yourself to obtain this great pleasure for us, and believe me, my beloved niece,

"Your ever affectionate aunt,

"MARTHA O'DONAGOUGH."

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE note of invitation being written, Mrs. O'Donagough rose, walked across the room, and putting it into her husband's hand, said, while she gave him an affectionate pat on the shoulder, "Read that, Donny, and tell me if you don't think I'm good for something!"

Mr. O'Donagough perused the billet with attention, and replied, "Yes, upon my honour you are, Barnaby! and if you carry this through, and get those stiff, formal people here to a regular evening party, you will do an uncommon good thing, and I shall give you more credit for that sort of talent (the most important that a woman can have, by-the-by) than ever I did in my life before."

It was just at this moment, and while Mrs. O'Donagough was still rubbing her hands, and giving by her countenance every indication of "measureless content," that Miss Patty entered the room.

"What have you got there, papa?" she cried, gaily, jumping forward towards him. "Give it to me, I will see it, that's poz. Mamma looks as if she were going to dance for joy about it."

"Give it to her, Donny," said her mother, "and then she will see what is going on."

Patty took the note, and having read it, exclaimed, raising both hands and eyes to heaven, "Well done, mamma! If you ain't the greatest liar that ever broke bread, I'll be hanged. Do you think the old soul will swallow all this? Lord, papa! when you see her you will be ready to crack, as I was—Love her!—*I* love her! Nasty little withered old weasel!—How can you write such lies, mamma?"

"Patty!" replied Mrs. O'Donagough solemnly, "there is one truth which, if you do not know it already, it is time you should. There is no duty more necessary to learn in the state in which it has pleased Providence to place us, than that we *must* lie, as you vulgarly call it, when it is necessary. A wife and a mother, Patty, has other things to think of, besides just her own conscience and convenience. Of course it is much easier to say the truth out, plump at once, and tell people that you don't like 'em, if you don't. But I should like to know how that would answer? Never you trouble yourself about my lying, I beg. I will never lie more than it is my bounden duty to do—and I certainly shall never neglect that, for any object."

"Your mother's a pattern, Patty," said Mr. O'Donagough, winking aside at his daughter. And then added, more gravely, "I'll tell you what, my beauty, I expect she's got hold of a fine hand of cards just now, and neither you nor I must spoil the playing of them."

"Bless your souls! good people, I don't want to spoil anything," replied Patty, flinging the letter on the table; "only I say, papa, mind one thing—if you expect that I'll palaver these nasty, disagreeable people for nothing, you're mistaken; but if you will give me a black silk *mantelet*, trimmed with lace, just like Matilda Perkins's, I'll engage to do whatever mamma wants with this little old mummy of an aunt. The old soul had sense enough to say that I need not kiss her, because I could make better use of my kisses than that, so I needn't cuddle her up, as mamma does Mrs. Hubert—and I'm sure I couldn't, without making all her little bones crack, and fall to pieces; but if you will give me the cloak, you'll see how I'll smile, and courtesy, and behave pretty."

"Get away with you," said her father, laughing; "you won't leave me a penny in my pocket, with your coaxing ways, if I don't take care. Come, my dear," he added, to his wife, "make haste, seal your note, and send it."

"There's a difficulty about that, Mr. O'Donagough," she replied. "It will be very awkward sending the maid of the house with it. Of course, if they come, we must hire a waiter, and take care to have everything in the very best possible style. That's the only way, depend upon it, to give us a fair chance

against the Huberts. How can I manage, my dear, about sending the note, without their seeing a maid-servant?"

"Give it to me—I'll send it by a fellow that shall look like a groom. That will do, I suppose?" said Mr. O'Donagough.

"Delightfully!" replied his wife. And the note was sent.

* * * *

When Mrs. Hubert joined her venerable aunt in her room, she found her in her usual mood, full of interest and affection about the children, Mr. Willoughby, the Stephensons, and all in short, who were objects of interest and affection to Agnes herself; but all trace of *persiflage* was gone, and, as it seemed, all memory of Mrs. O'Donagough with it.

After an hour's pleasant family gossip, they returned again to the drawing-room, where they found the general engaged in reading the London papers, which had just reached him. As if to atone for any petulance she might have shown in their late encounter, Mrs. Compton paused behind his chair as she passed, and laying her little hand on his shoulder, said "Dear general!—what a pleasure it is to see you all again!"

He understood this as an *amende*, and accepted it. Rising from his chair, he took her hand, kissed it affectionately, and leading her to a sofa, sat down beside her, and entered into a conversation full of kindness and animation on both sides.

In the midst of this a silver salver entered, bearing a note addressed to "Mrs. General Hubert." Agnes took it, and glancing her eye at the direction, laid it, unopened, upon the table.

"The servant waits for an answer," said the footman, distinctly.

"Who is that from, Agnes?" said the general.

Mrs. Hubert took up the note again, as if to examine it for his satisfaction, but she coloured as she did so, and both her husband and her aunt at the same moment, felt convinced that it was an *envoi* from Mrs. O'Donagough.

"You need not wait, Philip," said General Hubert, "I will ring when the answer is ready."

Mrs. Hubert meanwhile read her aunt's affectionate epistle in silence, and then put it into her husband's hand, who rose to receive it.

"This good lady seems bent upon putting your patience to the proof, aunt Betsy," said he, after glancing his eye over the contents. "It is from Mrs. O'Donagough, and contains an invitation for you and for us to an evening party, at her house next week."

"May I know what she says?" demanded the old lady, sedately. General Hubert put the note into her hands. "Alas!

general," said she, "I have not my eyes here—will you have the kindness to read it to me?" Agnes could not repress a smile as she watched the countenance of her husband on receiving this request, but there was no escape from the task, and he read aloud the affectionate effusion with perfect gravity, and very sufficient distinctness. The eye of Agnes was fixed upon her aunt as he proceeded. At first her countenance expressed a very natural inclination to smile, in which Mrs. Hubert frankly joined, feeling delighted that all mystification on the subject seemed at an end; but ere the lecture was completed, the mischievous little black eyes were soberly fixed on the carpet, the mouth pursed up in affected gravity, and every feature indicating a relapse into the same whimsical mood which had seized upon her on learning the arrival of her niece in England.

"I presume we shall all be of one mind as to the answer to this epistle?" said General Hubert, throwing the note upon the table.

"Indeed I hope so," replied Mrs. Compton, meekly. The general did not quite like the accent, and looking in her face, read there, plainly enough, her renewed purpose of teasing him. Had he at that moment wisely determined to lay down his arms, confess himself exceedingly annoyed at the result of his own indiscretion, and shown himself inclined to allow that they should have done better had they followed her advice, Mrs. Compton would have given him no further trouble; they would all have acted in concert, and the O'Donagough plague would have been stayed. Unfortunately, however, such wisdom did not at the moment suit his humour, and he met her renewed banter in a tone as foreign from sincerity as her own.

"Is the answer to be no, or yes?" said he.

"Surely we cannot refuse such an invitation as that?" said the old lady, in a voice which seemed to deprecate the general's suspected harshness of purpose. "I am quite sure that if you dream of doing so, it can be only on my account, and I cannot think of permitting it. Poor lady! how affectionately she writes. You really do seem, my dear Agnes, to have conquered, by your incessant kindness, all the little asperities of her character. And that noble-looking young lady her daughter, too! What a fond, attaching sort of person she must be! Do, General Hubert, have the kindness to read over again that passage in which Mrs. O'Donagough expresses the young lady's feelings towards me."

General Hubert cast a look upon his wife, half frowning, half laughing, and held out his hand again for the letter. But Agnes shook her head. Notwithstanding her strong affection for the old lady, she did not quite approve the species of disci-

pline she was bestowing upon her husband, and instead of giving back Mrs. O'Donagough's epistle, she opened it, and appeared to be pondering upon its contents.

"You cannot be in earnest, aunt Betsy," said she, "in talking of accepting this invitation. I am sure you would find an evening so spent intolerably tedious."

"Indeed, Agnes, you do not do me justice," replied Mrs. Compton. "The time has been certainly when I felt less kindly disposed to Mrs. O'Donagough than yourself and the general: nay, so far did I carry my prejudice against her, that I fancied there might be something like imprudence in renewing an intercourse which circumstances had so completely interrupted. I confess all this. But you are not to suppose me obstinate in error to such a degree as to refuse yielding my own judgment to that of General Hubert. And as to my finding the evening tedious, I am quite certain that I shall be more pleased and amused by it than anybody."

"Pray, Agnes, let your aunt do as she likes," said General Hubert. "Write, my love, will you, and say that you accept the invitation."

This was carrying the jest, if jest it might be called, considerably farther than Mrs. Hubert approved; and after the pause of a moment she determined upon venturing to address a remonstrance to both the parties, who thus, by the indulgence of a species of competition in wilfulness, half jest, half earnest, were, as she thought, running a great risk of getting into a scrape which would be equally disagreeable to both. But as she raised her head to speak, she encountered the eyes of her husband, who, evidently suspecting her purpose, appeared determined to prevent it by giving her a look that recalled at once his injunctions on the subject, and her own promise to comply with them.

"Here is your desk, Agnes," he said; "do not keep the servant longer waiting."

Agnes took paper and a pen, but again she paused ere she used them. "Are you really in earnest, my dear aunt, in saying that you intend to pass an evening with Mrs. O'Donagough?" said she.

"Pray, Agnes, do not doubt my word when I have given it to you," replied Mrs. Compton, very gravely. So a civil note, accepting the invitation, was written and despatched.

The manner of its reception very clearly proved its importance. Mr. O'Donagough himself indeed said but little, but that little was impressive. "General Hubert and his family are then actually coming to pass the evening here on your invitation, my wife?" said he. "Go on as you have begun, my Barnaby, and I may have to buy a court-dress for you yet."

It was not from seeing any improbability of the event predicted that Mrs. O'Donagough paid little attention to the prediction at that moment; on the contrary, her feelings might rather be expressed by the French phrase, *Cà va, sans mot dire* —but, gaily snapping her fingers, she only 'replied, "Let me alone, Donny, and you'll see sights before we've done."

Having uttered these sibylline words, Mrs. O'Donagough left the room, and sought, as all ladies under such circumstances do, to get together a female committee for the despatch of business. More rapidly than most persons of her age and size could have performed the feat, she descended to the parlour of the Miss Perkinses, and fortunately found them, together with Patty, in full enjoyment of the open window and the telescope. Had the room been unoccupied, not all Mrs. O'Donagough's triumphant feelings would have saved her from a state of positive suffering, for the same delightful exhilaration of spirits which then made her eloquent, would have swelled her bosom almost to bursting, had she found no friends to share it.

She entered with the important note open in her hand. "So! here you are, my dear girls! I'm monstrous glad I have found you, for I have fifty things to say. In the first place, my dear Miss Perkinses, I hope you have no engagement for Wednesday evening next, for I want you to pass it with us."

"Oh! my dear madam," replied the elder sister, "I am sure your kindness and hospitality know no bounds. We shall be most happy to wait upon you."

"If I had fifty engagements," said Miss Matilda, "you may depend upon it I should not keep one of them, if you asked me the same evening. Should I, Patty?" she said, affectionately squeezing the arm of Miss O'Donagough, which rested upon hers.

"You are a dear, good girl, Matilda," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, with chuckling good humour; "and this time I flatter myself I shall give you a party worth having. I know you admire both General Hubert and his lady, and they will be with us on Wednesday."

Not all Mrs. O'Donagough's efforts to assume a tone of *nonchalance*, as she said this, could prevent a degree of lisping affectation from pervading her delivery of the important names, but the two Miss Perkinses were two much excited to remark it.

"You don't say so!" honestly exclaimed the elder, without attempting to disguise either her surprise or pleasure. "This *is* kind, ma'am, indeed. I heard somebody say at the library that they were going to meet them at the Pavilion next week. Isn't it kind to ask us, Matilda?"

"Mrs. O'Donagough is always kind," replied the younger,

with great decorum, "and I shall have much pleasure in meeting the general and his lady, because I really admire them. One meets such multitudes of people that visit at the Pavilion, that it is not that circumstance which strikes me. But the near relations of friends I value so greatly cannot but be interesting to me."

"That's just like you, Matilda," replied the fond aunt of Mrs. Hubert; "and you will like too, I know, and for the same kind reason, to meet my rich old aunt, as well as my elegant niece. This old lady, Mrs. Elizabeth Compton, is not, I promise you, the least important personage of the party. She is the maiden sister of my late dear father, is as rich as a Jew, and looks, as I have good reason to believe, with rather a partial eye on my saucy Patty, here."

"Oh, you dear, lucky girl," cried the affectionate Matilda, throwing her arms round her young friend's neck—"How delighted I am to hear it."

"Lord! what does money signify, Matilda, to a girl that's young and handsome? If you think that I mean to be married for my money, you're out, I can tell you. I should have thought you had known better than that."

"Married for your money, indeed. What nonsense. Who ever thought of that?" replied Miss Matilda, playfully shoving the buxom Patty within sight of her own image in the glass; "but money's money for all that, my sweet girl."

"And so it is, Matilda!" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, approvingly, "and you can't do better than make Patty understand what that means. But now, my dear girls, we must come to business. Do you know I have been thinking that it would be better to have the refreshments down here, if you'll lend us the room?"

To this proposal the two sisters replied together, with such uniformity of accent, thought, and feeling, that it seemed as if one voice only uttered the joyful "Oh dear yes! we shall be *so* delighted," which followed it.

"Well then, my dears, that's settled. And now I must inquire about a nice respectable-looking man to wait. You don't happen, I suppose, to know of such a one, do you?"

"I am quite sure I know where you can hear of one," replied Miss Perkins; "for I saw a notice up at a baker's shop in one of the cross streets; I can't exactly recollect where; but I don't doubt that I could find it."

"What a dear, clever creature you are!" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, laying her two heavy hands on the slender arms of Miss Perkins; "then I shall leave that job to you. Next, there's the wax candles to be thought of. We must get Mrs. Bates to let us have all the lamps and candlesticks she has got. I see you have

branches to that pretty convex mirror over the sideboard; they will make the room look very elegant: but then there's the ice to be ordered, and cakes, and coffee, and cream. My poor head has work enough, hasn't it? That's the worst, you see, of giving parties in a lodging house, without one's own servants and things about one. Ah me! my dears, if you had known me at Silverton Park during the time of my first marriage with poor, dear Mr. Barnaby, you would wonder to see me make such a fuss as this about receiving a visit from my own nearest relations. But a lodging-house is but a lodging-house after all: and I need not tell you that General Hubert is a high and mighty sort of personage, for that you can see at a glance."

Nothing could more clearly show the elevated state of Mrs. O'Donagough's spirits than this allusion to her long-forgotten park at Silverton. The name of that beloved domain had never passed her lips from the hour she had dwelt upon its beauties to Major Allen, during the days of their Clifton loves, to the present. The Miss Perkinses, however, "caught it ere it fell to the ground," and it added much to the solidity of Mrs. O'Donagough's greatness in their estimation.

Having settled with their female friends all they were to do for her, lugged about the tables and chairs a little, in order to rehearse the arrangements for Wednesday, and given Patty a hint as to the danger of straining her eyes by a too incessant use of the darling telescope, Mrs. O'Donagough bustled up stairs again, and approaching her husband with a coaxing, but not doubting demeanour, told him that she had settled everything with the dear Perkinses about having their room, and all other things they were to aid her in, and that she was come now for his share of the job.

"And what's that to be?" he demanded, instinctively putting his hand upon the pocket where his money was deposited.

"Yes, Donny," said the lady, laughing, "that's it; at least that's one part of what I want. I will take care, my dear, that everything shall be in excellent style, and I will only trouble you for two articles—money and officers. I dare say the general plays a good rubber,—all officers do, you know. But at any rate we must have some red-coats to make us look gay."

Her husband looked up at her as she spoke with a queer sort of expression that she could by no means understand. However, she was not very anxious for an interpretation of it, when he said, "And how much money do you want, my dear?" She made her demand, which was complied with instantly, without an observation; a style of doing business so novel and agreeable, that she immediately left the room in a most enviable state

of spirits, to set off on a shopping expedition, without wait for his answer to her second demand.

It was not, therefore, till the very day of the party h arrived, that she received a bit of information from her husba which greatly lessened her anticipations of gaiety for t evening.

While enjoying a plate of her favourite prawns for breakfa Mrs. O'Donagough suddenly exclaimed, "By-the-by, Donny, am by no means sure that Foxcroft and Dartmore and Wil will be over well pleased with having nothing but ice and cak to eat after their rubber. I suspect that they'll miss the lobster salad and porter, and I'm sure I shall. What d'ye s to having a table laid in the corner of the dining-room, wit about half a dozen knives and forks, for those that like some thing substantial? And then, you know, if the Huberts g tolerably early, which they'll be sure to do, on account of the little creaky thing aunt Betsy, you can bring your old friend up stairs again, for another rubber and a glass of toddy."

"Have you done breakfast, Patty?" demanded Mr. O'Dona gough.

"All but this one prawn," replied the young lady, taking solitary straggler that remained in the dish.

"Well, then, go and take a look-out with the glass, and see if the French steamer is in sight.

This errand was of a nature to insure obedience, and Patty was out of the room in a moment.

"I say! Mrs. O'Donagough, I have got a word or two for your private ear, so sit still a minute, if you please," said the husband.

"Mercy on me! what's the matter?" replied the wife, somewhat startled both by the words and manner.

"Nothing at all is the matter, unless you make a fool of yourself; and I think you know better than that."

"I think so too," rejoined the lady, with rather a heightened colour; "but I wish you'd speak out."

"Don't be afraid, I'll speak out fast enough. You told me the other day that I was to get officers for your party to-night, and then you flew off in such a fuss, that I had no time to say anything in answer. But it's time to tell you now, that you can have no officers to-night, except the high and mighty Lieutenant-General Hubert, Colonel of the * * * regiment of Dragoons."

"And why not, I should like to know? Good gracious, O'Donagough! how very dull it will be!"

"It had better be dull than dangerous, Mrs. O'Donagough."

"Dangerous!" reiterated his wife. "What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean, my dear, that if I hope to do any good from the singular bit of luck which has brought me into kindred and acquaintance with Lieutenant-General Hubert, I must not invite Messrs. Foxcroft, Dartmore, and Willis, to meet him."

"Lord, Donny! Do you suppose he is such a fool as to expect people will never ask anybody but generals to drink tea with him?"

"Not exactly that, Mrs. O'Donagough. But he is a sort of man that one never invites to meet—sporting gentlemen, who live by their wits."

"I am sure it is a shame, then, that you should invite such people here at all. How do you know that some of 'em may not fall in love with Patty, some day, and a pretty match that would make, wouldn't it?"

"I must be doing business, Mrs. O'Donagough, let me be where I will; and you ought to know that, I should think, by this time. I'll take care that none, exactly of that sort, shall marry Patty, let them fall as much in love with her as they will; and remember now, and always, if you please, that your business is not to ask questions about my company. I shall never give lobster salads to anybody that I can't make pay for them, neither shall I ever spoil a great game by mixing it up with a little one. People starting with less advantage than I do now, have managed to line their own purses, and get a peer for a daughter into the bargain. I see no reason why I may not do the same. But it won't come by inviting size-ace together to a tea party."

"It is a monstrous bore," said Mrs. O'Donagough, "but I suppose you know best."

"Probably, my dear," replied her spouse. "Make yourself and your girl, and your room, as fine as you will; and have your Miss Perkinses to help, if you like it. No great harm can come of that. They are not handsome enough to have any danger in them. But for my playfellows, let me keep them in the background when I think fit, and make no remarks upon it. Do as I would have you, and when you get to London you shall be rewarded for it."

Though Mr. Allen O'Donagough did know *best*, his lady was not so ignorant as to be very greatly astonished at what she had heard; and being, as all the world allowed, a very sensible woman, she made the best of it—hinting to the Miss Perkinses, with a judicious touch of mystery, that General Hubert was known, by those who were nearly connected and intimate with him, to have a multitude of whims, one of which was, that he had a great dislike to associate with any but field-officers. Patty stormed at hearing this, and declared that she wished all the Huberts, man, woman, and child, were at the bottom of the

sea; but the Miss Perkinses knew better than to talk such nonsense, and even Miss Matilda felt capable of valuing the dignity of the association, though she was not insensible to the privations it brought with it.

General Hubert's family, meanwhile, were not unmindful of the threatened festivity, though not quite so much occupied thereby as the hospitable projectors of it. The general himself was a little chafed at finding that he was manœuvred into a scrape. But he managed extremely well to keep this feeling hid. His sweet wife suffered herself to be led, satisfied that she could not go very wrong if led by him. And Mrs. Compton quietly enjoyed the conviction that she should soon bring General Hubert to confess there was more wisdom in keeping clear of a Mrs. Barnaby, than in braving her approach, and trusting to dignity and skilful tactics to render her harmless.

That she was in a fair way to achieve this desirable end there was no doubt, and it might have been as well if the venerable plotter had rested satisfied with what she had already done to insure it. But she had no intention of letting the gentleman off so easily. She had not forgotten the many quizzings she had brought upon herself during the last dozen years by warning him, that half the globe did not afford distance sufficient to render intercourse and communion with a Barnaby safe. She remembered his jestings, gentle though they were, upon the circulating library as a source of knowledge respecting the conduct of human life; and the result of all these reminiscences was a determination to push a little further the system she had so ably begun. Some excuse for the old lady's persevering mystifications may be found, perhaps, in the skill and pertinacity by which he, for whose especial advantage they were set in action, concealed their effect upon him.

"Do all the dear children go with us to-night?" said the old lady, looking round upon the assembled family on the morning of the eventful Wednesday.

"Not any of them, I believe," replied Agnes, quietly.

"Surely, you do not mean that, my dear? Is the general growing cautious already? Is it he who objects to the young people's being introduced to their cousin?"

"No, indeed!" said General Hubert, turning over the mighty pages of the "Times" newspaper with a little *fracas*. "No, indeed, Mrs. Compton, I have not interfered on the important subject."

"Emily has not made her appearance at any evening parties as yet," said Mrs. Hubert, smiling.

"But Elizabeth is just the same age as her cousin," observed the old lady, with an innocent air of pleading for indulgence.

"I do hope you will let her go; unless, indeed, General Hubert sees any objection to it."

The general turned over another page of his noisy newspaper, but said nothing.

"Elizabeth may go if she likes it," replied Agnes.

"I would rather not go, mamma, if you please," said the young lady, slightly colouring.

"Why not, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Compton, holding out her hand to invite the recusant to her side.

Elizabeth went to her readily, and quite unconscious of the underplot that was going on, said very frankly,—

"Don't advise mamma to take me, aunt Compton, because I had a great deal rather stay at home with Emily."

The old lady kissed her cordially, and said, "You will feel a little shy with your cousin at first, my dear, I dare say; perhaps, indeed, it will take some time before you are thoroughly used to her. However, as you will have so many nice opportunities when you are all living together in London, I dare say your mamma and papa will let you remain with your sister this evening. We must have Compton with us, however. I hope he does not intend to forsake the old aunt who eloped with him?"

"I will go with you all the world over, aunt Betsy!" replied the youth, gaily. "Besides, I am exceedingly anxious to see my new cousin."

At about half-past eight o'clock in the evening, General and Mrs. Hubert, their son, and venerable great-aunt drove to the residence of Mr. and Mrs. O'Donagough on the East Cliff. The moment in which their carriage stopped at the door was a happy one for the five persons assembled in the drawing-room; for during the last hour, a constantly increasing fever of expectation had been tormenting them all.

"Well, now, I hope you will be contented, mamma?" cried Patty, from her station at the window. "One, two, three, four of 'em. There's no Miss Elizabeth though, but such a beautiful, tall young man. I do believe it is the Lord William I told you of, Matilda, only he is out of regimentals. It *is* good-natured of them to bring him, at any rate; and now," she added, in the whisper which so often marked their mutual affection and confidence, "now I shan't care three straws about Foxcroft and Willis—shall you?"

Ere the question could be fully answered, the "nice respectable waiter," threw wide the drawing-room door, and announced the guests.

Mrs. O'Donagough stood within six feet of it, radiant in crimson satin and blonde; and, as usual, ready to envelop her "darling Agnes" in an embrace, overflowing with lappets and

love. Behind her, in single file, were stationed—first, her daughter, in a transparent dress of rose colour over shining white calico; her profuse black ringlets dropping from all parts of her head, her large eyes flashing their eager rays through the doorway to light upon the expected lord, and her bright complexion very unnecessarily heightened in its glowing splendour by a slight touch of her mamma's rouge. Next appeared Miss Matilda Perkins, a very model for *careful dressers*. Not a pin but did its duty well; not a plait nor a pucker but fulfilled the wearer's will,—not a hair that produced not the effect of two. The more retiring elder sister was modestly sheltered behind her, conscious, perhaps, that the bracing energies of hope having failed her, the patience necessary for an effective past forty toilet, had failed her too, and that she was not sufficiently *fait à peindre* to appear in the foreground. Behind Miss Perkins, senior, stood Mr. Allen O'Donagough, sleek and sober in new broad-cloth, and a well-trimmed wig.

Mrs. Compton and her niece Agnes entered arm-in-arm, an arrangement which seemed to puzzle Mrs. O'Donagough, for she could not conveniently embrace them both together; and being particularly desirous that the Misses Perkins should see the elegant Mrs. General Hubert enfolded in her arms, she stood for half an instant, uncertain how to proceed. But a movement of Mr. O'Donagough favoured her purpose; for feeling himself rather too much thrown into the background by the two file of Perkinses, he made an active movement forward, and bowing profoundly, ventured to protrude a welcoming hand towards the ladies; whereupon, Mrs. Compton withdrew her arm from that of Agnes, and suddenly dropped into a chair, as if too much fatigued to stand longer; being prepared, as it should seem, to go all lengths for the promotion of her project, short of actually touching her Australian relatives.

The moment Mrs. Hubert stood alone, Mrs. O'Donagough pushed aside her husband's extended hand without ceremony, and with a movement much too sudden to be either foreseen or resisted, once more inclosed her in a fond embrace, which lasted so long, as to make Miss Perkins exclaim in a whisper to Mr. O'Donagough, "Dear me! What a pleasure it is to witness such affection! Your lady perfectly dotes upon her niece, and, I'm sure, no wonder!"

Released at last, Mrs. Hubert moved on, shaking hands with Patty, and bowing to her father. But there was still much bustling ceremony to go through; the two Miss Perkinses were to be introduced, and General Hubert respectfully, affectionately, and gracefully welcomed. This was all admirably accomplished by Mrs. O'Donagough; a low courtesy, a smiling pressure of the hand, and a sort of swinging bow, by which she

indicated to him an arm-chair at the upper end of the room as his place, completed the tripartite operation. But when she found herself face to face with the young Compton, she was puzzled. Who, or what he was, she could by no means conjecture; his remarkable height and manly appearance naturally enough prevented her from guessing that he was the son of Agnes; so having smiled upon him very graciously, and then recollecting who brought him there, turned round again and made him a courtesy, she set about insisting upon it that Mrs. Compton should change her place from the chair to the sofa; but the active old lady soon cut short her energetic pleadings by so rapidly making the movement she suggested, as to leave her suspended in the very middle of her "Indeed and indeed—"

It can hardly be denied, I believe, that, when a party of ladies and gentlemen are in a position from any cause embarrassing, the gentlemen are more awkward than the ladies in their manner of enduring it. Mrs. Hubert ceased to feel *embarrassée de sa personne* as soon as she had released it from the encircling arms of her aunt. Mrs. Compton, from the moment she had seated herself, began to enjoy the whole scene. Patty could be at no loss where or how to look from the moment Compton Hubert entered the room; the Miss Perkinses, each in her own way, were looking just as they ought to do; and Mrs. O'Donagough was much too fully occupied in the expression of her family feelings to be conscious of any awkwardness at all. But General Hubert held his hat in his hand less gracefully, perhaps, than he had ever held it before; and Mr. O'Donagough would willingly have compounded for misdealing three times at his next batch of whist, could he have obtained thereby the power of addressing three sentences to the general with a tolerable appearance of ease.

The first decisive change in this state of things was produced by Mrs. Compton's saying, in her gay, clear voice, "Pray, Mrs. Hubert, have you remembered to introduce your son Compton to your aunt Barnaby?—I beg pardon, I mean O'Donagough." The old lady probably expected to produce some picturesque effects by thus throwing a new light upon the circle; but it is probable that the result was even greater than she anticipated. No sooner did Mrs. O'Donagough catch her words than starting from her seat, her hands clasped, her head thrown forward, and her eager eyes advancing farther still, she rushed towards the startled young man, and, laying her hands heavily on his head as if to bestow her blessing, began parting and pushing back his clustering curls in order to enable her, as she said, to examine the features so naturally and so inexpressibly dear to her heart. As she thus held the youth imprisoned, gazing the while into

his forcibly up-turned face, she discovered that he was strikingly like every member she had ever known of his mother's maternal ancestors; and, as she named them all in succession, she impressed a fervent kiss upon his brow in honour of each individual of the catalogue. The young man became exceedingly red, and when at length released, the manner in which he shook his handsome head and set himself to rights again had something so irresistibly ludicrous in it, that even the vexed general indulged in a smile, and his mother laughed outright.

"Glorious creature!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, as soon as she had recovered her breath. "Good heaven, what a face! Patty, come to me, my child. This is the first male descendant of my beloved father that I have ever seen. Dear, blessed spirit! how his heart would have rejoiced to look upon him! Give your hand to your young cousin Compton. I rejoice that his name is Compton—my own dear maiden name! Take her hand, Compton, and remember that *your* great-grandfather and *her* grandfather were the same."

Compton Hubert was, perhaps, as saucy a student of fifteen as Sandhurst ever sent forth, a peculiarity of temperament considerably increased by the unlimited indulgence of his aunt Betsy, the principal object of whose life had been, from the hour that he first gave indications of having a will of his own, to indulge that will in every possible way. She was, unluckily, but too able to perform this by the pertinacity with which General Hubert had resisted all her efforts to endow Agnes with her wealth during her own life; after long battling, this point had been settled according to his will, leaving her at liberty to spoil his second son, who, before his birth, was promised to her as her heir to her heart's content. Some counteracting influence was, of course, found in the good sense of his parents when he was with them; and that he was in truth a fine, frank-hearted, generous fellow, can no more be denied than that he was *effronté* as a page, when occasion permitted.

It so happened, that exactly at the moment when Mrs. O'Donagough was so pathetically entreating him to take his buxom cousin by the hand, the lad caught his aunt Compton's keen twinkling black eye fixed upon him. It would not be easy to say what it was he read there which encouraged the perpetration of such audacity, but certain it is, that, instead of taking the young lady's hand as requested, he suddenly threw his arms round her neck and kissed her vehemently.

Mrs. Compton drew out her pocket-handkerchief, and its close application to her face prevented the possibility of ascertaining whether she laughed or frowned. Mrs. Hubert looked as grave as she could; the general exclaimed, almost unconsciously, "Compton!" Mr. O'Donagough grinned; Mrs.

*Affecting interview between Mrs. O'Do*

O'Donagough looked on with undisguised rapture, crossing her arms upon her own bosom, with a sort of tender pressure that seemed to indicate that in her heart she embraced them both. The Miss Perkinses looked, turned away their heads, and looked again; while Patty herself glowed, and pouted, and pushed, and laughed, and finally, when the young gentleman withdrew his arms, gave him a look which any spinsters, less devotedly attached to her than the Miss Perkinses, might have interpreted into a challenge to repeat the attack at the first favourable opportunity.

This little interlude produced an excellent effect on the spirits of most of the party; the general and his lady, indeed, might have felt inclined, had the thing been possible, to remove themselves and their son elsewhere; but the old lady was decidedly pleased by the adventure, nothing doubting that such and such-like occurences would speedily bring General Hubert to the state of contrition in which she was determined to see him.

Mrs. O'Donagough immediately felt herself not only the great-aunt *in esse*, but the mother-in-law *in posse*, of the young gentleman; while her calculating husband could not but see very substantial hopes of familiar companionship from such a beginning. The Miss Perkinses naturally felt themselves more at their ease in a little party so affectionately intimate together, and Patty snapped her fingers in her heart at all the Lord Williams in the garrison; though, at the same time, her faithful lover Jack caused her secretly to breathe a reservation in his favour, which, if interpreted, would have shown that she still intended to marry him, if he asked her.

"Ring the bell, Mr. O'D., will you? and let us have some tea and coffee. These hot evenings make one long for one's tea always, don't they Matilda?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, giving the young lady she addressed a sidelong look of triumph and delight, as she passed before her to resume her station near the sofa on which the old lady and Agnes were sitting.

The respectable waiter soon made his appearance, and laboured round and round the room, with coffee, tea, cakes, and bread and butter, without intermission, for the space of one hour; the conversation, meanwhile, being carried on chiefly between Mrs. O'Donagough and Mrs. Hubert, and consisting almost entirely of questions and answers concerning Mr. Willoughby's state of health, habits, residence, and pursuits—the number, fatness, leanness, shortness, and tallness, of Mr. Frederic Stephenson's children, and of the constant longing, from which Mrs. O'Donagough had suffered during the whole of her residence abroad, to know all particulars respecting every relation and connection which Mrs. Hubert had upon earth, who must

ever be, as she declared, more interesting to her than all the rest of the world beside.

By the time the persevering waiter had completed the last round of cake and bread and butter which he considered necessary, the recently smuggled French clock on the chimney-piece, being in excellent repair, audibly pronounced ten warnings of the progressive, though not always rapid, march of time. Several of the party counted the strokes, and Mrs. Hubert was one of them.

"I think the carriage must be here, general," said she, looking expressively at her husband; "we are always early," she added, turning to Mrs. O'Donagough, "when my aunt Compton is with us."

"Good gracious, my dear Agnes!" she replied, in considerable agitation; "you won't be so cruel as to think of going yet? You will positively break our hearts if you go away without ice, or oranges, or anything. Ring the bell Mr. O'D., if you please."

Mr. O'Donagough did so, sharply. The respectable waiter had not yet reached the bottom of the stairs, so the summons was answered with as little delay as his weariness would permit.

"Let the dining-parlour be ready for us *directly*, Potts," said Mrs. O'Donagough, very impressively; and then rising from her chair, she made her way by a brisk movement to the door, in time to reach him as he was passing through it, and whispered in his ear, audibly only to himself and Compton Hubert, who was carrying on a muttered tittering conversation with Patty, near it, "Don't forget to light the wax candles by the mirror, and let us know the minute it is all ready."

The interval which intervened before this announcement was made, certainly appeared a very long one, but it came at last; upon which, Mr. O'Donagough, according to previous orders, often reiterated, approached the sofa, and "louting low," offered his arm to Mrs. Elizabeth Compton.

"You are very obliging, sir," said the old lady, briskly; "but General Hubert is always kind enough to take care of *me*."

Thus called upon, the general drew near, and took the mischievous old woman under his protection, supporting her, as usual, very carefully, but certainly feeling a little provoked with her as the cause of all he had been enduring for the last hundred and twenty-three minutes.

Thus rebuffed, Mr. Allen O'Donagough next proffered his attentions to Mrs. Hubert, who accepted them, unconscious that she took the same arm from which she had shrunk with so much terror some few years before at Clifton—the gentleman, however, remembered it, and laughed inwardly; well-pleased at

the hocus-pocus sort of change his skill and fortune had jointly brought about. Then came the mistress of the *fête*, the gentle Miss Perkinses following after, not sorry, certainly (though deeply impressed with the honour they had enjoyed), that the period of its duration was drawing to a close, and not unmindful that, however long that period had appeared, the time which should follow, through which the ennobling recollection of it must last, would be the longer still. The procession was closed by Patty and her cousin Compton, the intimacy between them being greatly increased by the young lady's placing her hand upon the banister for a slide, and exclaiming,

"Now then! which will be down first?"

On reaching the bottom of the stairs, Mrs. Compton forgetting, or pretending to forget, that there was anything more to be done, walked briskly on towards the door of the house, at which a servant of General Hubert's was stationed; but Mrs. O'Donagough, on seeing her pass the open door of Miss Perkins's parlour, heedless of the radiant light that issued thence, or of the waiter who stood beside the entrance, doing all that man could do, save laying his hands upon her, to give her notice that she was to enter there; on seeing this, Mrs. O'Donagough pushed past her husband and Mrs. Hubert, and with almost panting agitation implored aunt Betsy and the general, to come into the refreshment-room, and eat some ice.

The necessity of compliance was so evident, that General Hubert immediately turned round, though the little hand which rested on his arm was *almost* withdrawn on his doing so. But, apparently, the old lady recollected herself, and felt aware that she was not performing well the part she had undertaken; for on entering the parlour, she immediately seated herself at the table, accepted everything that was offered to her, placing one thing aside, as soon as another came, and thus, though tasting nothing, setting an example of great activity. The eldest Miss Perkins ventured to seat herself beside her, obligingly offering her services to procure whatever she might wish to take, which Mrs. Compton replied to, by saying, "You are *very* kind, ma'am;" but when the worthy Louisa perceived that ice, orange, custard, and cake, were successively accepted, and successively placed aside, she could resist no longer, and gently ejaculated,

"Dear me, ma'am, everything is so nice, yet you eat nothing!"

"I never taste anything after a six o'clock dinner, ma'am, excepting a glass of cold water," replied the old lady, very civilly, but still continuing to extend her hand to everything that was offered to her. This appearance of occupation on her part certainly kept the party together considerably longer than

would have been the case without it; but at length she turned herself completely round to General Hubert, who stood behind her, and said, in her gayest, clearest accents, "Now then, general, I think we may go."

This proposition now appeared too reasonable for any further opposition; Mrs. Hubert had taken an ice, Compton had fed his cousin Patty with two, the general had swallowed a mouthful of execrable wine with his host, and the old lady had evidently done all she intended to do. Shawls, therefore, were sought and found, hands were shaken, "Coming out," was pronounced by Mrs. Hubert's footman from the door, and the party drove off.

The only words uttered among them *en route* were, "I fear you must be very tired, my dear aunt," from Mrs. Hubert; and, "Not the least in the world; quite the contrary," in reply, from Mrs. Compton.

## CHAPTER XVII.

WHATEVER might have been the degree of enjoyment produced by Mrs. O'Donagough's party, whilst the whole company remained together, it certainly ended in unmixed satisfaction to those who remained after General Hubert's carriage drove off. Mr. O'Donagough's feeling of enjoyment probably arose in a considerable degree from knowing that the thing was over. The Miss Perkinses, cordially pressed to fall upon the ices (which no degree of skill could preserve), not only luxuriated in their dulcet coolness, but in all the pride of having passed the evening in such society, and all the relief produced by its having departed. But the happiness of Mrs. O'Donagough and Patty was of a more substantial kind; they, indeed, also eat ice, and were not insensible to the delight of pulling off their gloves, and "feeling easy," as they all designated their present state of enjoyment; but beyond this, both mother and daughter contemplated results the most lasting and important from the events of the evening. Mrs. O'Donagough determined to be very cautious and diplomatic, and to "say nothing to nobody;" but she also determined that her own daughter should come to as great honour as the daughter of her sister, and marry a Hubert —unless she could do something better.

Patty, who looked perfectly intoxicated with delight, as she meditated on all that passed between herself and her cousin, came exactly to the same conclusion; the only difference being, that her reservation was in favour of Jack, while that of her mamma had reference to any lords who might chance to fall in her way.

The Hubert party said very little to each other about the visit, in any way. Perhaps Mrs. Compton would have thought she had done enough to punish her dearly-beloved general for all the pertinacy he had shown in making light of her prophecies, had he but uttered one single word indicative of dislike to the O'Donagough race in general, or to any individual among them in particular. But he said not that word. Agnes feared to lead to the subject, lest the species of covert warfare, which she perceived to be still going on between her husband and her aunt, might be excited thereby; and as for Compton, feeling conscious that he had been superabundantly impertinent, he secretly rejoiced that the adventures of the evening seemed to lie under an interdict which rendered all allusion to them impossible. His sister Elizabeth, indeed, found an opportunity to ask, when they were alone together, what he thought of their Australian cousin, and he replied by giving her just such a description of the evening as might have been expected from so saucy a personage.

Several excursions on sea and land immediately followed, during which the O'Donagoughs were, in truth, very nearly forgotten.

It was exactly one week after Mrs. O'Donagough's party, at half-past five o'clock in the afternoon, that Mr. and Mrs. O'Donagough, Miss Patty, the two Miss Perkinses, and Lieutenant Dartmoor, being all seated very comfortably at dinner in the drawing-room, were startled, and, as it were, dragged involuntarily from the table to the windows, by the most tremendous clatter upon the pavement that it was well possible for horses and carriages to make.

"Who in the world are these?" cried Miss Matilda to Lieutenant Dartmoor, beside whom she was so lucky as to be placed. "Three carriages and four, and two outriders; mercy, what a dust! Liveries green and gold—well! I should like to know who they are!"

"Stop a moment! I think I can tell you," replied the Lieutenant, protruding his person, almost at the risk of his life, through the open window, in order to obtain the information required. "Yes, I thought so; I remember the arms because of the crest—it's the Stephensons—they are first-rate dashers, I promise you. We had them here last autumn, and they made the whole place alive."

"Stephensons! what Stephensons?" demanded Mrs. O'Donagough, in a tone of authority. "Tell me, Captain Dartmore, all you know about them, I entreat you. I have an interest in that name which nobody else in company can have —except, indeed, my own daughter. Do you mean Frederic Stephenson, brother of Sir Edward?"

"Yes, ma'am; those are his carriages, I give you my word. Everybody knew the set-out last year; there was never a day that they were not making parties or pic-nics, or something or other. Several of our officers were always invited when they had dancing. Their arrival will make a sensation through the whole town."

"Gracious heaven! was ever anything so fortunate! Now, Mr. O'Donagough, I shall have the pleasure of introducing you to some more of my connections. You must remember Frederic Stephenson at Clifton—that is, I mean, you must remember my often talking about knowing him there."

"Perfectly," replied Mr. O'Donagough, gravely, re-seating himself at the table; "and no wonder you should have often mentioned him as a gay personage, if that is the style he usually travels in."

"He is a man of immense fortune, and such a dear creature!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, addressing Miss Perkins, and smiling as with a sort of tender recollection of past days.

"He is an old acquaintance, then?" said Miss Matilda, with nervous eagerness.

"Old acquaintance? Bless you, my dear, he is one of the nearest relations I have—by marriage."

"And coming here unexpectedly in this way! Well to be sure, you *are* fortunate, Mrs. O'Donagough. Are you not delighted, Patty?"

"No, not I," replied the young lady. "I don't see the good of having relations, if one never sees 'em. I'm sure the Huberts might as well be at Jericho as at Brighton, for anything we see of 'em."

"How can you talk such nonsense, Patty," said her vexed mother, "when you know that we have called there three times since the delightful evening they spent here, and have always heard where they were gone. They have always been driving into the country somewhere or other, to amuse my aunt Compton, I suppose, and people can't be in two places at once, let them wish it ever so much."

"That's true, I'm sure, if ever anything was," observed Miss Perkins, with energy. "The very nearest relations in the world can't always be as much together as they wish. And after what we saw the other night, my dear Miss Patty, you can't persuade us but what there's one of the party that wouldn't be very far from East Cliff, if he had his own way."

"Come, come, Louisa Perkins! No tales out of school, if you please. Let me give you a little more Irish stew, to stop that mouth of yours," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, laughing "Never mind her, Patty. Don't blush about it, cousins will be cousins all the world over."

"It is all very well to talk of drives into the country," said the judicious Matilda, taking her cue from Mrs. O'Donagough's evident delight in the subject; "it is all very possible. Nevertheless, people often throw dust without blinding the lookers-on. I saw what I saw, and I know what I know. The general didn't marry so very young himself, remember—and I suspect his opinion is, that young folks ought not to be too much in a hurry."

"There may be something in that, Matilda," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, nodding her head sagaciously. "We must not talk anything about it yet. Captain Dartmoor, remember that this is all among friends, and must go no further."

"Did Stephenson play when he was here?" inquired Mr. Allen O'Donagough, addressing his military friend.

"Oh yes, I believe so!" was the reply. "He did everything—rode races, gave balls, bespoke plays, got up raffles. There was something or other going on the whole time they stayed—and if you inquired, let it be what it might, you were sure to find that the Stephensons were at the bottom of it."

"What delightful people!" exclaimed Miss Matilda.

"Why yes," replied the lieutenant, looking towards Mrs. O'Donagough; "it would be a good set to get into, certainly."

"But the worst of it is," said Mrs. O'Donagough, with more dignity and reserve of manner than was usual with her; "the worst of it is, that these sort of people are so very exclusive. Near relations, of course, are excepted, but Frederic Stephenson, dear good-natured fellow as he was, and always particularly kind and flattering to me, even before he married my niece's half-sister, even he was always rather famous for giving himself airs."

A gentle sigh heaved the bosom of Matilda. Miss Louisa looked very grave, and shook her head, and the lieutenant seized the decanter of Mazooka, or Mortola, or Pontac, or Bondac, or whatever the mixture might be called which stood near him, and swallowed a glassful of it.

The result of a certain consultation held that night between Mr. and Mrs. Allen O'Donagough on the subject of this important arrival was that another call at General Hubert's house must be made on the following day, where, if they were not admitted, they might at least obtain intelligence as to the truth of Lieutenant Dartmoor's information.

The O'Donagough trio set off, accordingly, at a proper visiting hour on the following morning, dressed, one and all, with more than usual care, and determined that, if it were possible to avoid it, their trouble should not be in vain.

"Is Mrs. Hubert at home?" was the first question at the general's door. The servant hesitated, and Mrs. O'Donagough instantly made a movement in advance.

"I particularly wish to see my niece, if it be only for half a moment," said she.

"My mistress is just going out, ma'am," replied the man, standing rather pertinaciously in the doorway.

"It is only for one moment, and upon family business of importance," said Mrs. O'Donagough, making another step in advance, before which the man retired of necessity, but without quitting the handle of the door.

"Perhaps, ma'am, you would be pleased to leave word that you would call again," said the servant.

"What do you say, Mr. O'D.? Suppose we do, and fix the time exactly, and then we shall be sure of seeing her."

"Do just as you please, my dear," replied Mr. Allen O'Donagough. "It will make no difference to me. Only," he added, in a whisper, "you may as well ask about the Stephensons."

"Then we will call again—exactly at five o'clock to-day. Please not to forget the message, James—I think your name is James? I am pretty sure I heard my niece call you James."

"Yes, ma'am, my name is James."

"Well then, James, I must insist upon it that my message is delivered exactly. A message from your mistress's own aunt, you know, ought not to be neglected. Give Agnes—give your mistress, I mean—my most affectionate love, and Miss O'Donagough's love, and Mr. O'Donagough's compliments, and say that we shall call again precisely at five o'clock."

"Yes, ma'am," said the man, advancing a step in his turn, and bringing the door with him.

"Stop one moment, if you please," said Mrs. O'Donagough, laying her palm firmly on the outward side of the door. "Can you tell me, James, if the Stephensons arrived yesterday? Frederic Stephenson, I mean, who married your mistress's sister, you know."

The man looked rather surprised, either at the question or the manner of it, but answered, "Yes, ma'am."

"And where are they? Of course they can't all be here—three carriages—servants outside, and all?"

"No, ma'am, they went directly to their own lodgings."

"Then please to give me their address directly."

"Mr. Stephenson has taken ——— House, ma'am, the same he had last year."

"——— House. Whereabouts is it? Do you know ——— House, Mr. O'D.?"

Mr. O'D. did not, but the servant gave the full address, and at length succeeded in shutting the house-door.

"Now, then, let us go there directly," cried Mrs. O'Donagough. "It is no good beating about the bush. Let us take

our chance at once. If they choose to be civil, why so much the better, and if not, why we can't help it, and the sooner we know it, the better."

To this reasoning Mr. O'Donagough made no objection; and after toiling a considerable distance through unmitigated sunshine, somewhat to the injury of his lady's rouge, and not much to the advantage of his daughter's temper, they at length reached the handsome mansion to which they had been directed. Mr. O'Donagough stoutly pulled the bell, more stoutly than the well-hung instrument required; and the *tintamarre* thus produced occasioned an instantaneous throwing wide of the folding-doors, disclosing to the dazzled visitors a handsome hall, which at the first glance seemed half-filled with livery servants. The green and gold, recognised by Lieutenant Dartmoor, was indeed there, and in great abundance, but set off with such richness of plush and profusion of lace and tassels, that the great soul of Mrs. Allen O'Donagough *almost* felt daunted. Till that moment she had conceived that the establishment of General Hubert was perfectly splendid, but thenceforward she rarely named the family without observing that nothing could be more unpretending and quiet than their manner of living—merely a butler and two footmen, besides the coachman and grooms;—but always adding, that to be sure nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the two sisters in their style of doing things—the establishment of her brother Willoughby's second daughter being really almost royal in its magnificence.

An answer in the affirmative being returned to their inquiry if Mrs. Stephenson were at home, their names were received, and passed from mouth to mouth till the sound of Mr., Mrs., and Miss O'Donagough, made the lofty staircase ring again.

Mrs. O'Donagough, with an effort worthy of her powerful mind, immediately recovered her self-possession, and gracefully shaking her plumes, marched up the stairs in unblenched majesty. Mr. O'Donagough followed, looking as demure as a newly-created bishop, while the young lady, with wide-staring eyes, and a countenance indicative of something approaching dismay, closed the procession.

On reaching the drawing-room door, Mrs. O'Donagough paused for a moment till her husband and daughter were beside her, and then stepped forward, determined that nothing short of her being turned out of the room should prevent her establishing her claim to connectionship with all the grandeur she beheld. The first room they entered was exactly in the style of decoration most likely to enchant the senses of Mrs. O'Donagough, being of that florid character which is calculated to insure a rent of forty guineas per week at a watering place.

As it was untenanted, she ventured to exchange an expressive glance with her husband: but the man in green and gold stalked on, and another pair of folding-doors being thrown wide open before them, disclosed a room with an immense semicircular window opening upon a balcony, which commanded a magnificent view of the sea.

In this balcony stood two gentlemen, the one arranging a spy-glass on its trellis-work, for the accommodation of the other; while a third, whom Patty instantly recognised as her cousin Compton, was assisting a little fellow in a fantastic fancy-dress, composed of blue silk and white muslin, to climb in the most dangerous manner possible to the roof of the frail construction. Close beside the window, on a couch placed perfectly in the shade, though all without was sunshine, reclined nearly at full length, an extremely delicate-looking little woman, with a profusion of light ringlets about her face. Her robe, of the finest muslin, lined with the prettiest shade of pink, was profusely decorated with lace, her small feet accommodated with quilted satin slippers of the same pale colour, and her slender fingers, sparkling with gems, employed luxuriously in arranging a bouquet of flowering myrtle, and gorgeous geranium-blossoms.

This pretty and very picturesque lady raised a glass to her eye as the strangers were announced. Let them have been whom they would, she could hardly have risen, so difficult would her attitude, and the multitude of flowers in her lap, have rendered the attempt, had she made it. But this she did not do; and her eye-glass failing to supply the information which their names did not convey, she turned it from her visitors to the servant who had ushered them to her presence, and pronounced the word, "Who?"

This was not promising, any more than the puzzled air with which, after the name had again been distinctly pronounced, she shook her head, and in a soft, and somewhat lisping voice added, "I fear there is some mistake."

"I cannot be surprised at your not knowing me, my dear Mrs. Stephenson," said Mrs. O'Donagough, pushing away a little work-table, and placing herself close to the sofa, "but I think you must have heard your sister Agnes mention her aunt. —Perhaps you may recal the name of Barnaby?"

"Mrs. Barnaby? Oh dear yes, certainly!" replied Mrs. Stephenson, slightly colouring, and slightly smiling at the same time. "I have heard of you very often. Is that tall lady your daughter? Pray sit down. Sit down, sir," with a wave of the hand to Mr. O'Donagough, which seemed to indicate rather a more distant part of the room for his station. Then turning to a flaxen sylph, of some ten or twelve years old, who was threading beads, she said,

"Go out, Agnes, and tell your papa, and your grandpapa, that Mrs. Barnaby is here."

"No longer Mrs. Barnaby, my dear madam." Give me leave to introduce Mr. O'Donagough, my husband, and Miss O'Donagough, my daughter."

"Oh dear yes; I beg your pardon. I remember all about it now. You went out to India, did you not, as a widow? I quite remember hearing Mr. Stephenson speak of the widow Barnaby; and you married in India, I suppose?" Here Mrs. Stephenson again conveyed her glass very unceremoniously to her eye, and reconnoitred first Mr. O'Donagough, and then his daughter, Mrs. O'Donagough herself being too close to render it necessary; though, in truth, she was exceedingly near-sighted. "I dare say," she continued, still employing her glass, "that my father will remember all about you directly, and I am quite too happy you have called, I wanted to see you so very much."

"It is sweetly kind of you, I am sure, to say so," said the delighted Mrs. O'Donagough. "No wonder that I should long to see *you!* I shall always consider your dear father as my brother, and one of his children must, of course, be as interesting to me as the other. I am quite certain that in a very little while my own dear Agnes, my own sister's child, would hardly be dearer to me than yourself! You are the very image of your dear father! So like what I remember him at Silverton!"

The still youthful-looking face of Mrs. Stephenson was, during nearly the whole of this speech, completely buried in the large bouquet she held in her two hands. Nor did she speak again, till, in obedience to her summons, Mr. Willoughby and Mr. Stephenson entered from the balcony. Then, raising to them a pair of laughing eyes, though her manner was perfectly grave and ceremonious, she said,

"Papa, this is Mrs. Barnaby. The late Mrs. Barnaby, I mean. Frederic, I believe you used to know her too. Her name is now Mrs. Donago. She is come to call upon us, with all her family."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mr. Willoughby, coming with outstretched hands towards his sister-in-law. "Indeed I am very glad to see her. I hope you are well, my dear Martha?" and with a kind and gentle smile he attempted to take her hand.

But this was not the species of salutation in which Mrs. O'Donagough's warm heart (as she was wont to describe it) most delighted.

"No, dearest Willoughby!" she cried, "after such an absence, let us meet as we parted at Silverton, with a sisterly embrace!" The gentleman of course complied; but sighed as

he felt his own slight person lost, as it were, and buried in the majestic vastness of that of his sister-in-law, and remembered how very different were the circumstances of the two moments she thus placed side by side.

The operation completed, however, he resumed his quiet and gentlemanly kindness of manner, gave two fingers to the extended palm of Mr. Allen O'Donagough, upon that person being solemnly presented to him, and kissed, without waiting to be asked, the blooming daughter of his recovered relative.

Mrs. O'Donagough, with her usual quickness, immediately saw that of all the great and grand connections amidst which her happy destiny had thrown her, Mr. Willoughby was the one to stick to, with the least chance of being shaken off. She felt that he was her sheet-anchor, and round him she determined to swing, let the wind blow from what quarter it would.

While these introductions and embracings were proceeding, Mr. Stephenson and Compton Hubert stood silently watching them; the former, with his usual unwearied spirit of gaiety, determined to administer to the amusement which the eyes of his wife—the only portion of her face that was visible—showed she derived from the scene, and the latter only waiting till his grandfather had concluded his civilities to Miss Patty, in order to renew his own acquaintance with her.

Mr. Stephenson speedily perceived that there was no need of any interference on his part, in order to put the well-remembered Mrs. Barnaby in action for the amusement of his wife; neither did it seem to him at all necessary on the present occasion, to put in play any portion of that fund of good-humoured *persiflage*, in which his Nora delighted, for the purpose of bringing forth to view Miss Patty's claims to the same species of notice, inasmuch as his young friend Compton appeared fully adequate to the task. Therefore, having bowed a smiling acknowledgment to Mrs. O'Donagough's affectionate recognition, he sat himself down so as to command a full view of the whole party, and of his wife's eyes into the bargain.

It required but a slight glance from time to time to perceive, that however absurd, there was nothing very new in the flirtation going on between the young people; every feature of the case being essentially the same as must ever recur, when a bold boy is encouraged in his audacity by a coarse-mannered girl. But not so Mrs. Allen O'Donagough. Her energetic affection—her laughing ecstasy at their present reunion, and her weeping softness over the days that were gone—her modest insinuations of her own "*genteel independence*," and the joy she anticipated from watching with "*true sisterly affection*," his present affluence—contrasted with Mr. Willoughby's somewhat embarrassed, but always polite manner of listening to her, formed a

*tableau* of no common kind, and one from which a less laughter-loving pair than the one before whom it was performed might have found amusement.

At length it seemed to strike Mr. Stephenson, who, notwithstanding his too boyish love of mystification, was really good-natured, that Mr. O'Donagough was left rather too much in the back-ground, and turning abruptly round to him, he said, "Won't you take a look at our fine view, Mr. O'Donagough. This is the most commanding window in Brighton."

Mr. O'Donagough immediately rose, and with a not very unskilful assumption of gentlemanly ease, walked towards the window.

"It is perfectly magnificent!" he said, "and it is unique. No other mansion in Brighton is so happily situated."

"That is very true, sir," said Mr. Stephenson, rising, and following him out upon the balcony. "We have been fortunate enough to get this house three years running."

Frederic Stephenson was one of those happy-natured people who, loving his wife and children, heartily loved also, only in a somewhat less degree, all the other goods with which the gods had provided him, and wanted no warning voice to bid him "think them worth enjoying;" but liked well, nevertheless, that all around him should perceive and acknowledge what a particularly happy fellow he was in all respects. Had Mrs. O'Donagough been within reach of watching her husband during his conversation with Mr. Stephenson on the balcony she would have found that she did not yet know him so well as she fancied she did, and that there was still some aspects of his Proteus-like nature which had never been exhibited to her. With a cautious avoidance of all subjects that might prove dangerous, Mr. Allen O'Donagough now conversed like a man of the gay world, who knew perfectly well how to appreciate so accomplished a personage as Mr. Stephenson. With the rapidity which is usually acquired by persons that not only possess their wits, but live by them, he contrived to form a tolerably correct estimate of the strong and the weak points of the gentleman's character before he parted from him, while at the same time he left on Mr. Stephenson's mind a persuasion that he was a remarkably clever, well-informed man, and that it was quite wonderful how he could ever have married such a ridiculous person as Mrs. Barnaby.

Their colloquy and their acquaintance might have proceeded still further had not Mrs. Stephenson got tired of watching Mrs. Barnaby and her father, and Miss Barnaby and her nephew, which happened the sooner from no longer having her husband's eyes to answer the appeals of her own. For a time, indeed, her young daughter, who forsook her beads, and changed

her place for the purpose of watching the odd-looking strangers, supplied his absence tolerably well, by the very intelligent looks which she exchanged with her mamma (for it was not part of the family discipline to deny the younger branches their fair share and participation in all the enjoyments of quizzing); but the young lady, after having seen enough to enable her to mimic both Mrs. and Miss Donago satisfactorily, ran off to the schoolroom, to puzzle the French governess, and delight her sisters by the performance.

Soon after her exit, Mrs. Stephenson withdrew the sheltering myrtle from her face, and freely yawned. But neither Mrs. nor Miss O'Donagough saw it. They were both too happy, too elated to observe it. The graceful lady then changed her position on the couch, and with an air of pretty restlessness threw aside her flowers, took a book, yawned again, and finally rose from her attitude of repose, and despite her fear of freckles, sought her husband in the balcony.

*E troppo caro!*" she whispered in his ear.

Mr. Stephenson immediately broke short the conversation in which he was engaged, by saying to his wife, as he took her arm, to lead her from an atmosphere which he knew she dreaded, "You are come to remind me, Nora, of my engagement—are you not? I must beg you to excuse me, Mr. O'Donagough, I am obliged to go out, and must therefore wish you a good morning. If you will leave your card, I will certainly have the pleasure of calling on you." The observant Mr. Allen O'Donagough took the hint, and re-entering the room gently admonished his wife upon her seeming forgetfulness of the flight of time.

"My dearest O'D., can you wonder at it?" she replied, her eyes and her cheeks glowing with enthusiastic sensibility. "Think of the years which have elapsed since my dear brother-in-law and I have thus sat side by side together! Can you not imagine how it must bring back the memory of my beloved Sophia? Such moments are too delicious to be measured?"

Mrs. O'Donagough slowly rose from her chair as she spoke; and what with feathers, veil, floating mantle of stiffened muslin, and her own august expansiveness, it struck Mrs. Stephenson that she had never seen anything so large in her life before, and she seemed to shrink up into her own delicate *mignardise*, as if anxious to increase the contrast. Mrs. O'Donagough stepped towards her with an extended hand; but the fair Nora had no mind to be "shaken," and glancing up an appealing look to her husband, which he perfectly well understood, she retrograded a step or two, at the same time bowing her farewell, while he advanced, took the large hand in his own much smaller one, and atoned for all his lady's deficiencies, by a voluble repetition of "Good bye, Mrs. O'Donagough, good bye, good bye."

Though Frederic, notwithstanding all his good nature, shook the huge hand very much as if he wished to shake it off, Mrs. O'Donagough held fast, till in a half-whisper, she had murmured something very tender to him about the memory of Clifton, and past times—then determined to emulate the elegant retreating movement of Mrs. Stephenson, she began backing out of the room, bending deeply forward at every step, like the head of a ship in a *too* fair wind, and reiterating "GOOD morning! GOOD morning! GOOD morning!" till she reached the door.

Mr. O'Donagough was so glad that it was over, and, as he felt, *well* over, that on throwing open the door of communication between the two drawing-rooms, for his daughter and wife to pass, he slipped by them, as if the more quickly to insure his own retreat. On reaching the landing-place, however, and finding himself again amidst the impressive troop of green and gold officials, he remembered that he was not making his exit according to the established rules of etiquette, and turned round to make way for his wife and daughter to pass before him. It was with a feeling little short of dismay, that he found that they were not, as he imagined, close at his heels, and on casting an Orpheus-like backward glance into the rooms, he perceived that his wife was *not* half set free, for she was still in the inner apartment.

In fact, while backing out of the room with her husband and daughter following, Mrs. O'Donagough had totally lost sight of and forgotten her slender brother-in-law; but no sooner did she perceive him again upon the removal of Mr. O'Donagough's person, than it struck her she had not properly taken leave of him, and rushing back again, she very liberally threw her arms around him—for her fond hands met behind his back—and impressing a not silent kiss upon his cheek, exclaimed, "Good heaven! was I indeed going without uttering a sister's farewell to you, dearest Willoughby? Let us soon meet again. I have no words to express the happiness I feel in your society." And then, as Frederic, Nora, and the young Compton had all taken refuge in the balcony, she turned about, quitted the room with a rapid step, seized upon Patty's arm, who was left staring in the doorway, rejoined her husband, and with happy and triumphant feelings descended the stairs, which, as she owned as soon as she had left the house, she had mounted an hour before with her heart in her mouth.

"She is gone, positively gone, Nora!—so come in, out of this scorching air!" said Mr. Stephenson, after carefully reconnoitring the apartment.

"Thank our stars!" replied his wife, falling, as if exhausted, upon the sofa.

"It is a very hot day," said Mr. Willoughby, rising from a chair, into which he had sunk, when Mrs. O'Donagough withdrew her arms from his person. "Very hot and oppressive indeed—I think, Nora, I will go into my own dressing-room, and lie down upon the sofa a little. But don't let any of the dear children come to me, for I feel very much overcome and fatigued." So saying, the gentle, kind-hearted Mr. Willoughby languidly withdrew, and soon fell fast asleep without having even whispered to his own heart that his affectionate sister-in-law had nearly talked and hugged him to death.

"Are they not curious people, aunt Nora?" said Compton, as soon as his grandfather had quitted the room.

"Curious! Oh! heavens!" replied Mrs. Stephenson, with a profound sigh. And then she stopped, as if unable to articulate another word.

"The girl is handsome though, isn't she?" demanded the youth; adding, with a shrug, "but to be sure she is most horribly vulgar."

"Handsome? you have the face to call that monster handsome, Compton? How hideously ugly you must think us all, your mother and sisters included."

"No I don't, aunt. But there are more styles than one, you know."

"Do stop him, Frederic! For mercy's sake do not let him talk of *styles*, with that fearful creature in his thoughts! Do explain to him what style means, will you? His mother has a style, and I have a style—of—of appearance, I mean. But to use such a phrase to her, really looks as if he did not know the use of language. It is perfectly disgraceful. Dearest Frederic! for pity's sake, tell me, must I ever endure the sight of those people more?"

"Upon my word, I am afraid so, Nora," was the unsatisfactory reply. "Remember that they are nearly related to your sister Agnes, and in fact very nearly connected with your father. How will it be possible to avoid your seeing them?"

"Then you must make up your mind to my dying, Frederic, for as to my enduring existence under circumstances resembling those of the last three hours, it is perfectly out of the question."

"Well then, dear, we must contrive to vary the circumstances as much as possible. The sight of that great woman amuses me more than I can express. It is a sort of lesson in natural history to watch her as she is now, and remember her as she was some dozen and half years ago, or near it. I would not give her up for more than I'll say—and Compton's love too, with her large face, bright cheeks, and brighter eyes. They are treasures, perfect treasures in their way."

"See what it is to be a philosopher," sighed forth Mrs. Stephenson, resting her head on the arm of her couch, and applying a bottle of salts to her nose. "You are too sublime for me, Frederic—you are indeed."

"If you will be a good girl," replied her husband, laughing, "and promise not to die about it, I will let you off easy, promising only to indulge my scientific speculations now and then. How she contrived to get him I cannot guess; but Madam Barnaby's husband is really a very well-behaved, sensible man."

"Oh—h!" was uttered by Mrs. Stephenson, with another profoundly deep "suspiration of forced breath."

"Come, Nora," said Frederic, "make the best of it. I am certain your father will be vexed, dear good man, if you declare open war upon this unfortunate race."

"My father? Nay, Frederic, it is too good to quote him against me when you have this moment seen him take to his bed, sick of the Barnaby! However, let us talk no more about them, or decidedly I must go to bed too. Ring the bell, dear, will you, and order some open carriage or other—I die for fresh air! By the way, Frederic, do you think that large lady will ever kiss me? I give you warning, you will never see me alive again if she does."

"Every possible precaution, Nora, shall be taken to prevent it; and we will keep Compton always in readiness to act as your deputy, should the thriving offspring of the large lady attempt anything of the kind. You will not refuse, Compton, to perform this vicarial service for your aunt?"

The boy coloured, tossed his handsome head, and yielded to the solicitations of his young cousin to return to the balcony, and set him climbing again.

"Where will you drive, Nora?" inquired Mr. Stephenson, when the carriage was announced.

"To see Agnes, and consult with her how best to guard against the inroads of this horde of savages."

"Do so, my dear, by all means. She will counsel you very discreetly, depend upon it."

* * * * *

When the sisters met, there was, as usual, a very free exchange of confidential communication between them. Mrs. Stephenson declared that her curiosity being satisfied, she felt nothing but terror at the idea of any familiar intercourse with "Mrs. Donago;" and that, somehow or other, she must find means to prevent. To all this Agnes listened without surprise; but when in her turn she dwelt upon her own embarrassments from the same source, and related all the circumstances of the general's half-playful warfare with Mrs. Compton on the subject,

the feelings of Nora underwent a sudden change. Notwithstanding a firm foundation of genuine liking and goodwill, there was often a considerable difference of opinion on many subjects between the high-minded and dignified, yet simple-mannered General Hubert, and the capricious and affected, though affectionate little beauty, his sister-in-law.

She had quite sense and right feeling enough to be conscious of his high worth, and often in her graver moods, acknowledged his superiority to everybody in the world, but her husband. Yet she dearly loved to contradict him, and to make him feel, in spite of all his wisdom, that the very folly of a pretty woman has power in it. She was, moreover, wont to declare, that his wife spoiled him, and that all he wanted to make him perfectly agreeable, was a little well-organised contradiction.

The tormenting process which the venerable Mrs. Compton seemed to be now making him undergo, for the express purpose of proving that he had been wrong, secretly delighted Mrs. Stephenson. She listened to every word concerning it with deep attention, comprehended perfectly the game which both parties were playing, and immediately determined, thoughtless of consequences, to eke out aunt Betsy's efforts to prove that the general had blundered by every means in her power. Of this new whim she gave no hint to Agnes, but parted from her with a gentle promise to endure the Donago infliction as patiently as she could.

Had it not been for this unfortunate vagary on the part of Mrs. Stephenson, it is probable that all serious annoyance from the O'Donagoughs would have gradually died away, from the positive difficulty of keeping up anything like friendly intercourse between persons so every way incongruous. But for this, the *ci-devant* major's ambitious projects would have gradually sank into a humbler sphere, his wife would soon have preferred talking of her "darling Agnes," to enduring the restraint of her presence; aunt Betsy would have grown weary of the sport, and so would Master Compton too; while it can hardly be doubted that General Hubert himself would have gladly suffered the discordant connection to be placed on a proper footing, according to Mrs. O'Donagough as much consideration as might be granted without inconvenience to his own family, but no more.

That all this was most devoutly to be wished, nobody felt so strongly as poor Agnes; but unfortunately in this case, neither her judgment nor her conduct could avail to check the mischief produced by the frolicsome thoughtlessness of Nora—the easy pliability of her husband, and the sort of compunctuous weakness with which poor Mr. Willoughby permitted himself to be persecuted by his first wife's sister, as a sort of atonement for

his deeply-repented neglect of her child. All this worked together so effectually, that before the end of a fortnight, the mischief had got so far ahead of them, as to produce a perfectly good understanding on the subject between General Hubert and Mrs. Compton. Both cordially confessed they had been wrong, and most cordially united in deprecating the consequences of it; but, unfortunately, they were no longer capable of stopping the movement they had put in action.

Mr. O'Donagough, without making the slightest attempt to lead Stephenson to play, contrived to discover that in the winter he had no sort of objection to it; and, meanwhile, by innumerable devices to make himself useful and even agreeable to him. With as much genuine coarseness, he had infinitely more tact than his vulgar wife, and was, in truth, so able an actor, that with an object of sufficient importance before him, he was capable of sustaining many characters extremely foreign to his own. Stephenson soon believed him to have been the most enthusiastic sportsman, the most enterprising naturalist, and the most benevolent speculator who had ever visited New South Wales, and listened to his unbounded lies with undoubting confidence, till at length he became fully convinced, that despite the peculiarities of "the Barnaby," he had found a very valuable acquaintance in her husband; and that at the time when everybody was talking of the country with interest, it was really very pleasant to have picked up a man who probably knew more about it than any one else in England. It was exactly the sort of thing Frederic Stephenson liked, enabling him to get in the van of information, without the bore of reading interminable books, and endless quarterly articles upon it; and, in short, Mr. Allen O'Donagough was soon on such excellent terms with "the rich Stephenson," that he dined with him twice in one week, and might most days be seen walking and talking with him on the pier for an hour together. This intimacy went on the more prosperously, because Mrs. Stephenson contrived in her usual easy style, to perform her part of the mischief she was so thoughtlessly promoting, with very little inconvenience to herself. She called once or twice on Mrs. O'Donagough; but as her carriage had two or three children in it, she could not leave them, and therefore only sent in her card, and when these visits were returned, it was poor Mr. Willoughby who had to converse with her. The inviting Mr. O'Donagough to dinner, of course did not include the ladies of the family; yet the talking of it served extremely well to show the general that his friendly reception of his wife's aunt had already entailed the connection upon them, and in addition to this, Nora more than once amused herself by inviting Patty to pass the evening when Compton was engaged to dine with

them, a device which produced a display of coquetry on the part of the young lady, so comic, as repeatedly to make her forget her fine-ladyism in hearty laughter at the remembrance of it.

It was by dilating a little too maliciously upon this, in the presence both of General Hubert and Mrs. Comptom, that the foundation of a perfect reconciliation between them was laid. No sooner did they find themselves alone together, or, at least, with Agnes only for a witness, than they both, as by common consent, pleaded guilty to great folly in permitting Compton to amuse himself in so objectionable a manner; and the ice once broken, nothing could be more frank than the sincerity with which each declared themselves to blame. But, unfortunately, it was much easier to confess the fault than to remedy it; and so insidiously did Mrs. O'Donagough contrive to turn every accident to profit in promoting the intercourse between the cousins, that at length the old lady suddenly declared her intention of returning immediately to Compton Basset, and taking her young heir with her for the purpose of giving him some shooting upon *his own manor*. This was conferring a degree of pre-eminent dignity upon the boy, which both father and mother, under other circumstances, would have been very likely to disapprove; but now no objection was made to it, and the scheme was immediately decided upon. The bright eyes of Miss Patty could by no means stand a competition with partridge shooting with his own dogs, and the youthful Lothario, mounted on the coach-box of aunt Betsy's carriage, dashed past the abode of his *belle*, and waved his hat so gaily to her and her mother, who stood together at the open drawing-room window, that though little was said between them on the subject, both felt that "spiteful aunt Betsy" had achieved a *tour de force*, which disappointed many projects.

The mother consoled herself by remembering, that "the horrid old woman could not live for ever," and the daughter found solace in a long recapitulation of Jack's love-making on board the Atalanta, during a long walk on the cliff with her faithful friend Matilda.

The departure of Compton, and, to say the truth, the departure of aunt Betsy also, were, under the present circumstances, a considerable relief to General Hubert; nevertheless, the O'Donagough plague was far from being put an end to by it. Agnes was still perpetually pained by witnessing the annoyance endured by her father under the persecutions of his affectionate sister-in-law.

It was Mr. Willoughby's habit to ramble out every morning when at the sea-side immediately after breakfast, sometimes leading one grandchild with him, and sometimes another. Mrs.

O'Donagough soon became acquainted with this fact, and from that hour the unfortunate gentleman was never permitted to inhale the breeze he loved without having her closely fastened to his side. Though neither his spirits nor his frame were particularly robust, he might, perhaps, have endured this daily annoyance with greater fortitude, had it been confined to the operations of her tongue as she walked beside him; but always conscious that of all those upon whom she hung for the gratification of her ambition, he was the one who would endure the demonstrations of her love most patiently, she never relaxed in her determination to make the most of him.

This led to such heavy hangings on his arm, such lusty tappings on the back when she had hunted him into the public library, and so many other wearying tokens of affectionate familiarity, that, though he complained to no one, his life positively became a burden to him; and it was only because he thought somebody or other would guess the reason and think he was unkind to "poor Sophy's sister," that he did not at once take to his bed in order to get rid of her.

The only person who did *guess the reason* of his languid looks and altered spirits, was his daughter Agnes; and the idea having once suggested itself, there was no great difficulty in testing its truth and convincing herself that it was well-founded. As soon as she became quite sure of the fact, she pointed it out to her husband, who secretly reproached himself much more severely than he confessed for having been so greatly the cause of it. These feelings *d'un part et d'autre* soon led to the anticipation of a scheme, long ago projected, but not intended to take place till the following year.

General Hubert's eldest son had gone through Eton school, with such brilliant rapidity as to be ready for college at least two years before his father wished to send him there. During this dangerous interval he had himself determined upon being his tutor, and, by taking him on the continent with his mother and sisters, hoped to assist essentially the formation of his moral character while giving him the advantage of modern languages and extensive travelling.

In this scheme Mr. Willoughby had been always included; he had already repeatedly visited Italy, and had so uniformly found himself in better health on the continent, that nothing but his averseness to leave his daughters and their children induced him to reside in England.

Had General and Mrs. Hubert wanted any confirmation on the subject of Mr. Willoughby's weariness of Brighton, they would have found it in the manner of his receiving their proposal for immediately leaving it for France.

When every member of a party is cordially desirous of

promoting a scheme, and ample means exist to facilitate its being carried into execution, it is wonderful how much may be done in a little time. Mrs. Hubert, Miss Wilmot, and the two girls with their attendants, almost immediately crossed to Dieppe under the escort of Mr. Willoughby, while General Hubert, who it was settled should join them at Paris, returned to London for the purpose of settling everything previous to his leaving England, and arranging the movements of his son Montague upon his finally quitting school.

Old Mrs. Compton had been long prepared for this separation, and was comforted under it by Compton Hubert's promising to make Compton Basset, now become a very handsome residence, his principal home during the vacations; while to its taking place somewhat earlier than was intended, she was perfectly reconciled by the motive for it.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the sudden departure of General Hubert, and his family, the memory of their greatness, like the light-diffusing tail of a comet, remaind behind them, and Mrs. O'Donagough continued to be a person of unquestionable importance with all her Brighton acquaintance. The circle, indeed, was not a large one; her affections, as she observed to every member of it, having been too much centred on her own relations to leave her leisure for cultivating the miscellaneous friendship of the world at large.

"I know this is not right," said she, "I am quite aware that it is one's duty to be condescending and civil to everybody; but with me it is always the heart that speaks, and it would be in vain to attempt struggling with my affection for my darling niece, Mrs. Hubert, and her dear family—they have made me positively neglect everybody else; but I cannot help it! Those who know her will appreciate the attraction, and forgive me; while by those who do not, I must submit to be accounted fastidious, exclusive, and most abominably proud."

Mr. O'Donagough, who, when he was not meditating on matters more important, would frequently derive considerable amusement from listening to his wife, now and then indulged in a little quiet quizzing at her expense; but she had too much good sense to take a great deal of notice of it, and generally contrived, indeed, to end by having much the best of it in her own opinion.

One point on which he particularly liked to attack her was on the change in their relative positions, as to their intercourse

with the Stephenson family. He remembered their first visit, and the secondary part he had acted upon that occasion, which he loved to contrast with the one now allotted him.

"I cannot think how it is, my dear, that you see so very little of your own near connection, Mrs. Stephenson, while I am got so pleasantly intimate with her husband; but it seems really as if you counted for nothing with them," said he.

"The reason for that is plain enough, Mr. O'Donagough—I cannot abide that little idiot woman; in fact, I perfectly hate the sight of her—odious doll! lolling almost at full length in her open carriage, just to make everybody stare at her, with a dozen children like so many monkeys stuck up behind and before, to make up the show."

"Don't agitate yourself, my dear!" resumed the gentleman, in a mild voice; "though I cannot greatly wonder at your feeling vexed. She really takes no more notice of you than if you were no relation at all; and considering how remarkably affectionate you are to all your cousins, it must be very trying."

"You may keep your pity to yourself, Mr. O'Donagough; and if you fancy I am affronted, you were never more deceived in your life. Besides, you mistake the matter altogether. The fact is, she is all but blind, poor thing, and I don't choose to be always bawling after her, as the carriage drives along; but it is most preposterously out of the question, to suppose for a moment, that she would dare to cut me!"

"Well, my dear, I dare say you know best; but sometimes it looks very like it."

"Nonsense, O'Donagough! Cut me, indeed! when her own father, dear affectionate creature, perfectly dotes upon me! He treats me a thousand times more like a sister than a sister-in-law, and—bless him!—I love him in return as a real sister should, and so he shall find, I can tell her, as soon as he comes back to England; for let him be where he will, in town or country, I am quite determined to be near him. People as sincerely attached as we are, cannot bear to be long parted."

* * * * *

Some weeks more of fine autumn weather passed away, during which the O'Donagough family, and their little *coterie*, continued to enjoy the sea-breezes and each other's society, in the most fashionable manner.

Some desultory conversations occasionally arose between the *ci-devant* major and his lady as to what they were to do, and where they were to go next. On all these occasions, Mr. O'Donagough permitted his wife to talk almost as much as she liked, without uttering a word that deserved the name of contradiction. But though she laid down very plainly what he had

best do—and what of course he would do—and what it would be perfect madness if he did not do, the subject always came to a close without leaving her at all wiser respecting his real intentions than when it began.

Meanwhile, Patty was enjoying herself greatly; for though, as she ingenuously confessed to her friend Matilda, she had no one *beau* in particular, there was not one of the set, except Foxcroft, who did not make a little love to her whenever they had an opportunity. But a heavy blow was about to disturb her tranquillity.

The Miss Perkinses having by this time, in the most ladylike and respectable manner, expended the sum (whatever it might have been) destined for their marine excursion, had been one morning looking anxiously over all their little accounts, and had reluctantly decided that it was quite time to return to their first floor at Belle-Vue-terrace, Brompton, for the remainder of the passing year, and the first seven months of the next.

They had just mutually exchanged the melancholy words, "Yes, we must go!" when their beloved Patty, with her accustomed vehemence of vivacity, bounced into the room.

"What a hateful bad day it is for the glass!" she exclaimed, rushing to the window, which a driving rain from the south-west had obliged the sisters reluctantly to close. "Not a soul to be seen in the sea, or out of it! Isn't it a bore?"

"Alas! my dearest Patty," replied Miss Matilda, "vexing as it is to see the rain fall so, I have got something at my heart worse than that."

"Why, you haven't seen Foxcroft go by without looking in, or anything of that sort, have you?" replied the sympathising young girl, with a significant smile.

"No, Patty, no, not that. I really don't believe there is any danger of it," replied Matilda, with a heavy sigh. "Poor Foxcroft! poor dear fellow! he little thinks how soon all our delightful evenings in that dear drawing-room up stairs will be over!"

"Over!" echoed Patty. "Why, what's in the wind now? the route isn't come, is it?"

"Not for him, Patty, but it has come for me!"

"What do you mean, Matilda?"

"Only too truly what I say, dearest; think what I feel, when I tell you that my sister has received a letter from London this morning, which renders it absolutely necessary that we should return home immediately."

"Stuff and nonsense!" replied Patty. "I should like to know what there is to make you two go, if you choose to stay? What's the good of being old maids?—of course I don't mean *you*, Matilda, for I really don't believe you will be one in the

end; but what's the good of having nobody in the world belonging to you, if you can't stay when you please, and go when you please?"

"Business, my dear, you know, must be minded," said Miss Louisa, rather mysteriously.

"Well, then, let Miss Louisa go by herself," said the lively Patty. "She is old enough to walk alone, and I neither can nor will be left here without you to walk with, Matilda. You shan't budge a step, till we go too."

"Dear, darling creature!" exclaimed Miss Matilda, in a burst of enthusiastic fondness, while a delightful hope flashed through her mind that it was possible Mrs. O'Donagough, to please her daughter, might ask her to remain as their guest after her sister went. So overwhelming was this sudden hope that it almost choked her, and pressing both her hands upon her heaving breast, she looked in the face of her young friend with the most touching expression imaginable.

Patty inherited a considerable portion of her mother's acuteness, and saw in a moment what her friend had got in her head. The idea accorded perfectly with her own inclination, which would have prompted her at once to offer the half of her own little bed, rather than be left without a friend and confidant. But she remembered her papa, and remembered, too, the cold-meat dinners which frequently graced their domestic board; so she prudently restrained her hospitality, and only said—

"Stop a minute, Matilda! I want to speak to mamma, and you must not stir till I come back again."

"Darling girl! I know what she is gone for," exclaimed the agitated Matilda, as soon as the door was closed. "Oh, Louisa! I shall be perfectly wild with joy if she succeeds. I do assure you, very seriously, that I think Foxcroft means to propose to me. You need not shake your head so gloomily, my dear. I know you are thinking how often I have been disappointed before; but certainly no one can be so good a judge as myself what his manner is. Besides, Louisa, if the O'Donagoughs invite me, I should like to accept it, whether I am right or wrong about Foxcroft; but this I will say, that if he really does mean nothing, it is better for my peace of mind that I should find it out at once, and if I *do* find him to be such a villain, I shall soon cease to care about him, I can promise you that. You may depend upon it, my dear, I shall spend nothing—not a single sixpence after you are gone, excepting about eighteenpence a week for my washing."

While the ardent Matilda thus pleaded her own cause below stairs, her faithful friend was not less eloquent above. She had, however, a tougher listener to deal with.

"So here you are together—that's right," said she, as she

entered the drawing-room, with an assured step and confiding spirit; "I have got something that I want to say to you both."

"And what may that be, Miss Brighteyes?" demanded her father.

"I'll tell you in no time," replied the young lady, approaching him; "but please to remember, papa, that this time you must let me have my own way, or you and I shall be two."

"Indeed! and pray what's in the wind now?"

"What do you think, both of you, of the Perkinses being going away?"

"No! are they indeed?" cried Mrs. O'Donagough.

"Never mind, Patty, we shall not be long behind them," added her husband.

"But I don't choose to be behind them at all, papa," replied the young lady.

"That's nonsense, Patty. I won't have you go trying to fix their starting for just the same day as ours; I don't want to have my travelling ways spied into by anybody, and that I should have thought you might have known by this time."

"Oh yes, papa, I know all that of course; but as I have chosen Matilda Perkins for my particular friend, she must not be counted as anybody; and what I have come for now, is to say that you must let me invite her to stay behind her sister, and sleep with me."

"You shall do no such thing, Miss Patty, I promise you," replied her papa; "and if you have got into the scrape of asking her, with your eyes shut, you may get out of it as you can with your eyes open. And now come here," he continued, holding out both his hands to invite her approach, "I have something to say to you." Patty felt a prodigiously strong inclination to snap her fingers, and run out of the room; but she fortunately gave a glance at the expressive countenance of her parent, and then walked quietly enough towards him, placing her hands in his. "Now, then, Martha O'Donagough," he said, "listen to a word or two, and take my advice when I tell you to remember them. I never will, now or ever, suffer any human being, man, woman, or child, except servants, to enter my house as an inmate. You are but a baby, Miss Patty, with all your cleverness, as to the ways of the world, or you would understand the wisdom of this. But whether you understand it or not, REMEMBER IT; and remember, too, if you please, that though I give you free leave to make as many friends as you like, and to talk to them early and late, of your bonnets and beaux, I will lock you up upon bread and water, as sure as you stand here, if I ever catch you uttering a single

syllable about me, or my house, or my friends, or anything that I do, or anything that I say. Don't fancy, Patty, that I shall not find it out. I have not lived for nothing, my dear, and what I want to know, I generally get at, first or last. Ask your mamma."

Mrs. O'Donagough, though possessed in no common degree of the courage and confidence produced by the consciousness of great mental power—and no woman could have a much higher idea of her own ability—felt nevertheless something exceedingly like awe, as she now listened to her husband. She often, indeed, felt that she did not fully comprehend him—that there were still many peculiarities in his character that she could not quite make out, and that, although, as she constantly assured herself and Patty, she was not in the least bit afraid of him, some feeling which she could not exactly describe, generally in all their little disputes, led her to the conclusion that it might be as well not to defy him. It was this which made her, when thus appealed to, immediately answer, "Mind what he says to you, Patty, there's a good girl. Of course he knows best, and when he speaks in earnest, as he does now, it would be very silly and wrong not to mind. So say nothing at all, Patty, to Matilda about staying. I can't say I should much approve it myself—she has always seen everything about us quite genteel, and what's the good of letting her know what we like to do when we are quite by ourselves? Besides, Patty, you must see that she is getting so intimate with Foxcroft as to be sure of telling him just everything—and I have no notion of that. The officers have always seen us in the most agreeable manner possible—and what with my clever little suppers, and my dear relationship to the general, it is sure and certain that we count for people of consequence with them, which may be a great advantage to us all, let us meet them where we will."

"That's enough, and to spare, mamma," said Miss Patty, venturing to bestow upon her female parent the sulkiness generated by the decision of her father. "For pity's sake, don't go preaching on any longer. If I mustn't have a friend to speak to, I mustn't, and there's an end of that—only I hope we are not to stay much longer in this beastly stupid place—I am as tired as tired of it." And with these words the young lady made her exit, slamming the door after her with considerable energy.

She had no great difficulty, on reaching the parlour again, to read on the countenance of her friend the hopes and expectations to which her own sudden departure had given rise, and spite of the lecture she had just received, she scrupled not to confess that she had asked for leave to invite her, and had been refused. Her manner of confessing this, however, showed the

species of inherited talent she possessed, as much as it did h filial obedience to the spirit as well as to the letter of h instructions.

"I would have given anything, Matilda, to have got you t stay with me," she said, "but mamma's notions are always s grand about everything, that she won't ask you because sh hasn't a fine handsome bedroom to put you in."

"Oh, dear me! I hope she would not mind that with such an intimate friend as I am!" exclaimed the affectionate Matilda, almost sobbing with eagerness.

"There's no good thinking any more about it, my dear," replied Patty, decisively. "It's no go."

"And all because of the bedroom being little!" rejoined Matilda, with a groan. "Oh! Patty! I'd sleep upon the floor with a blanket round me, with joy and gladness, that I would! —Yes, Patty, or without a blanket either, rather than go away from you—that I would!"

The excited feelings of the disappointed lady here overpowered her, and she burst into tears.

"It is folly and nonsense crying about it, Matilda," said Patty, with less of sympathising softness than her friend might have wished. "That's not my way. They never make me cry now, let them do or say what they will. I always get my own way when I can, and when I cannot, which isn't often, I just snap my fingers at them, and take pretty good care to get something else out of 'em before I've done."

Miss Matilda here took Miss Louisa aside to the farthest corner of the room, and consulted her in a whisper, as to the possibility of her continuing to occupy their present bedroom for a week or two longer.

"My dear child," replied the tender-hearted elder sister, "there is nothing I would not do to help you; but you know we have reckoned the money over and over, and that there will be, when all's paid, but just enough to take us to our own door, and not a penny to spare. I wish to heaven you had not bought that blue silk gown, Matilda!"

"There is no good in taunting me with that now, Louisa; I had the best of motives for it, and it is cruel to throw it at me, at the very moment too when I am within such a hair's-breadth of making it answer. Dear, dear Louisa! do try to help me! Think what a thing it would be for both of us, if I *was* to marry!"

"What *can* I do, Matilda?" replied the elder; "I can't do miracles, you know." But after a moment's consideration, she added, "There is but one way I can think of, and that's one I don't like at all. I suppose we *might* leave the shoe bill till next year."

"Good heavens! to be sure we might," replied Matilda, with recovered spirits, and suddenly giving her sister a most cordial kiss. "There is nobody of any fashion, as we all know, who does not leave bills everywhere." Then suddenly approaching Patty, who, despite the unfavourable state of the atmosphere, was employed as usual in making experiments with the telescope, and addressing her in a tone that expressed both tenderness and gaiety, she said, "My darling Patty! I do positively think it would break my heart to part with you a single hour before I was absolutely forced to do it, and Louisa says that of course I could keep on my own bedroom, if that was all."

Considerably alarmed by this pertinacity, which appeared very likely to bring her into a scrape, Patty replied rather abruptly, "Yes, my dear, but it is not all: papa is every bit as proud as mamma, and he says that nothing in the world should ever make him invite any one to stay with us without having servants, footmen, you know, and all that. So it is no good to say any more about it."

"But, my dearest Patty! Surely such a friend as I am—"

"Say no more about it, I tell you, Matilda, but run and put your things on, and come down to the pier; it does not rain a drop now to signify, and I am pretty sure I saw Foxcroft and Willis cross over as if they were going that way."

It was with a heavy heart, though with a rapid step, that the unfortunate Matilda ran up stairs to comply with this request, and mournfully desponding was the voice in which she murmured to her friend, as they walked along, "Oh, Patty! if we should meet Foxcroft, how shall I bear to tell him that we go on Monday?"

"You must make the best of it, my dear, that is all I can say," replied her friend. "But step quicker, Matilda! There they are, as I live, just going upon the pier now! They must have stopped somewhere or other since I first saw them."

The eyes of Patty had not deceived her: on reaching the pier they found the two gentlemen she had named, beguiling their superabundant leisure by leaning over the wall, and watching a distant ship or two through the haze. Of course the young ladies expressed some surprise at seeing them. "So, then, you are no more afraid of a Scotch mist than we are?" said Patty, giving her parasol to Mr. Willis, while she tightened the strings of her too fragile bonnet.

"Anything is better than staying boxed up at home," replied the young man; "and I suppose that's your idea, Miss Patty, as well as ours?"

"I suppose it is," answered Patty. "But I don't intend—

to stand still, shivering like this—I shall walk up and down just as fast as I can trot."

"Well, then, you had better give me your arm, or upon my life you will be blown over," said Mr. Willis, while Mr. Foxcroft offered his to her companion in the most touching of manners, namely, without saying a word; which always seems to indicate that protection on the one side, and dependence on the other, is a matter of course between the parties.

Patty and her companion chattered away at a great rate; but Mr. Foxcroft and Miss Matilda Perkins walked on for several paces without exchanging a word. The lady's heart was beating violently, and the gentleman's head was at work.

When an unmarried officer of the line is very hard up, it is by no means an unusual thing that he should turn his thoughts towards matrimony; but when conscious that his last birthday left him within a lustre of half a hundred, and that his hair is a dapple, between red and gray, he confines himself, if he be wise, to the minor prizes in the market, takes especial care that there be no fathers or brothers in the way, and is particular about nothing, save the certainty that the lady has got something, and that this something is at her own disposal. At the moment above mentioned, Lieutenant Foxcroft was turning in his head all the facts which had reached his knowledge tending to throw light on the financial concerns of his fair friend. Mr. O'Donagough had shown himself perfectly ready to give all the information he could, to which friendly openness he was perhaps in some degree prompted by the fact, that Mr. Foxcroft owed him a debt of honour, amounting to seventy-three pounds—but in truth, his knowledge of the Miss Perkinses' concerns was not sufficient to justify giving advice on so important a point, and the brave lieutenant felt that he must be his own pioneer. This naturally gave something of restraint to his conversation, while on the other hand the collected tenderness of thirty-six years, in a bosom peculiarly prone to receive soft impressions, produced a swelling fulness in the heart of Miss Matilda, which for a considerable time rendered it impossible for her to speak a word.

At length Lieutenant Foxcroft became fully aware that there was something dangerous in this protracted silence, and preluding the words by a slight cough, he said,

"What a very unpleasant day for the seaside it is."

It was with a sigh which an actress might have taken as a model, that Miss Matilda replied "Very."

Again they were both silent; when the lady, perceiving by the green drops that trickled from her parasol upon her bosom, that it would probably soon rain too hard for even Patty to continue her promenade, determined that the precious moments

Mrs. Matilda Perkins takes a last fond look of [illegible] de

which were passing, should not pass in vain, and struggling to subdue the vehemence of her feelings, that she might speak distinctly, she said,

"Captain Foxcroft, this is, I suppose, the last walk that we shall take together at Brighton. My sister and myself return to our London home on Monday."

They had just reached that end of the pier which abuts upon the sea, as this annunciation concluded; upon which the Lieutenant stood stock-still; and though the barrier against which the waves were rudely breaking was cold and wet, the agitated Matilda gladly availed herself of the support it offered; and, regardless of the smart silk-scarf that perished in the act, she placed both her arms upon it, and remained with her eyes intently fixed upon the ocean.

The news she had thus communicated considerably startled Mr. Foxcroft, and plunged him in a very disagreeable dilemma; for he was by no means ready to act upon it in any way. He would, indeed, have been vastly imprudent had he committed himself either by declaring a passion or pronouncing a farewell. For while, on the one hand, the lady's evident independence, and equally evident partiality, urged him forward, his ignorance of the amount of what he might gain by proceeding, kept him back. His conduct, under the circumstances, was in every way judicious; being, in fact, the result of great experience, and a thorough acquaintance with all such matters. After a pause, which told Matilda quite as plainly as any words could have done, that her news had almost annihilated him, he said,

"Is it possible?"

"It is indeed!" she replied, with expressive emphasis.

Another pause followed.

"In what part of that vast wilderness will you be hid, my dear Miss Matilda?" said the Lieutenant, with a truly military sigh.

"We live at Brompton," was the softly-whispered reply.

"Of course, our friends, the O'Donagoughs, will always know where you are?"

"Oh! yes," she answered, while her heart was torn by conflicting joy at this proof that he meant to inquire for her, and grief at perceiving that whatever might be his future intentions, there was for the present no hope whatever of a declaration.

Such being too clearly the case, and the rain now falling in such torrents that Patty and Mr. Willis had taken to their heels and ran home (not without a little joking upon the *tête-à-tête* at the pier-head)—such being the case, Miss Matilda Perkins made up her mind to turn round and walk home likewise. But even, in that wet, dirty, dismal moment, hope

lingered at her heart, and she determined to try what one honest, open, unmitigated look of tenderness might produce. The circumstances of her position were favourable to the experiment, for the "plentiful moisture" which encumbered her hair gave her face a sort of forlorn and melancholy look, of which she was not wholly unconscious, and which she thought might serve her better at such a moment than the tightest curls. But, alas! there are some natures upon which the innocent little trickeries and pearly tears of tender woman fall like soft dew-drops on the sturdy oak. They may glitter about it; nay, sometimes shine almost like a glory around its lofty crest, but not a fibre is moved thereby.

Nothing could be more expressive, more intelligible, more heart-searching than was this look of Matilda Perkins—but it was in vain. As well might cannon be expected to startle a well-trained charger, as such a look to shake the firmness of Lieutenant Foxcroft.

This is a subject painful to dwell upon; and it is enough to say that the two sisters departed by the stage on the morning appointed, without carrying with them any consolation whatever for the imprudent purchase of the blue silk-gown.

## CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER six weeks completed the period for which Mr. O'Donagough considered it advisable to remain at Brighton, and due notice was given to his lady and daughter that they were to pack up their faded finery and be ready for starting. The O'Donagough policy as to the most advantageous mode of performing a journey, had not undergone any alteration since their arrival, and therefore, exactly the same process was gone through to restore them to the metropolis as that which had brought them from it. Having chosen rather a late coach, they reached the renowned White Bear in very proper time for dinner; but Mr. O'Donagough, for reasons of his own, preferred ordering luncheon, after which he once more set out in quest of a home for himself and his family. His absence upon this occasion was very short, for it being the latter end of October, lodgings were not difficult to find; and in less time than it would have taken most people to think about it, he had packed himself, his lady, his daughter, and all their baggage into a hackney-coach.

"You must neither grunt nor grumble, turn sulky nor look cross," said Mr. O'Donagough, as soon as the vehicle drove off, "if you don't happen to like the lodgings I have got for you.

They are cheap, and that's the reason I take them. I don't intend that you should either see or be seen much for the next two months or so, and I desire that you will make up your minds to it at once."

"What does he say, mamma?" inquired the terrified Patty, turning to her mother; for what with the wheels, and the steps, and the windows, she had heard this speech but very imperfectly. "What does papa say about our not being seen?"

"Hold your tongue, Patty," being the only answer she received, the young lady turned to the window, let down the glass, and for the next five minutes found great consolation from meditating on the impossibility of not being seen, if she lived in a place where such throngs filled the streets as were then jostling each other before her eyes. At the end of that time, the equipage stopped at the door of a small private house in one of the narrow streets that steal away and hide themselves right and left of the splendours of Regent-street. The aspect of the dwelling was not very inviting from without, nor was the prospect greatly improved when the door opened and displayed its size, colour, and various other properties within. But Mrs. O'Donagough entered, and neither "grunted nor grumbled, turned sulky nor looked cross." Her whole manner and appearance indicated the triumph of reflection over impulse, and of wisdom over weakness. She quietly followed the dirty little maid who opened for her the front-parlour door and permitted her eye to take a catalogue of all it contained, without suffering her tongue to utter a syllable of commentary thereon.

Not so Miss Patty. The contrast between this dwelling and that she had left at Brighton was "too much for her strength," and she exclaimed, in no whispered accents—

"Mercy upon us, mamma! You don't mean that we should live here?"

Fortunately, Mr. O'Donagough was at that moment wholly occupied in assisting the coachman to drag their trunks and boxes into the narrow passage, which they so completely filled that he was induced to offer the man an additional sixpence upon condition of his "giving him a hand" to get them up stairs to their sleeping apartments at once, a promptitude of arrangement which was rendered expedient from the total impossibility that any animal more bulky than the dirty little maid should get in or out of the house without climbing over them.

The interval thus occupied gave Mrs. O'Donagough an opportunity of bestowing a few words of very excellent advice upon her daughter.

"My dear Patty," said she, "there is no doubt in the

world that this is the very horridest den that ever man brought a wife and daughter to. And I, too, with such relations as I have! But you see how I bear it; and take my word for it, there is no good in contradicting him just at this time; I am quite sure he has got something or other working in his head that makes it convenient. I don't mean to say but what if he would trust the whole management of everything to me, I might have contrived to do all he wants done, and kept something like comfort about us besides; but men will be men, Patty, all the world over, worse luck!"

To all this Patty made no other reply than a grunt.

The evening passed, as such evenings generally do. A family group placed in lodgings of which females greatly disapprove, but which, being chosen by the male, must be endured, seldom manifest any striking symptoms of hilarity.

Fortunately, however, Patty was very sleepy; and fortunately too, perhaps, Mrs. O'Donagough remembered that she had more than one box to open before all the nightcaps could be found; so it did not last long, and before ten o'clock the eyes of the whole party were closed in sleep, as sound as the circumstances of their location were likely to permit.

Poor Patty's boasted beauty did not show to advantage the next morning, and, to do Mr. Allen O'Donagough justice, it must be confessed that he looked at her with some concern. But as his wife had very correctly observed, he *had* something working in his head which rendered their remaining in obscurity for a month or two exceedingly convenient; and, therefore, being a man of considerable firmness of purpose, he had not the slightest intention of altering his plans, though he perceived that one of the bright eyes he so much admired was almost hid by the swelling which distressed her cheek, and the other as dull, dim, and heavy as if the light which usually blazed within it had been suddenly put out.

But, notwithstanding the steadiness with which he retained his resolution of keeping the ladies of his family in this perfect retirement, he yet felt good-humouredly disposed to support the young lady's spirits under it if he could, and therefore, while her mother was engaged in the rooms above, he drew a chair towards the recess beside the fire-place, where, in a slippery, tall, horsehair arm-chair, poor Patty sat ensconced, and thus addressed her:—

"You don't like this so well as our gay lodgings at Brighton, do you, darling?"

"What d'ye ask that for, papa?" replied the young lady; "I should think you might guess, without my telling you."

"And so I can, Patty. But you can't guess, I'll bet a guinea you can't, what's going to happen to you next."

The telling such a young lady as Patty that "something is going to happen to her," almost invariably suggests the idea that she is about to be married; and so it was in the present case. The swelling on her cheek did not—for, alas! it could not—disappear in a moment, but all other obscurations of her beauty vanished, as she exclaimed, "Good gracious, papa! what can you mean?"

"What have you got in your head now, Patty?" replied her father, laughing. "You don't think I'm going to give you a husband, do you?"

"How should I know?" returned the pouting Patty.

"No, my darling, it is not that yet," said he, assuming a more serious air; "I wouldn't, for more than I'll say, that my girl should be mated before she has got her best feathers on. You shall be something, and somebody, I can tell you, before I have done. But then you must let me manage matters my own way, my dear. I have had great misfortunes in my time, Patty, or I might have been as rich and as grand as Mr. Stephenson, and that was the reason why I went over to such a cheap and prosperous country as Australia. But things are going better with me now again, and if you'll be a good girl, and wait patiently, without any expense, till the proper season for gaiety begins, you shall see what I will do for you; and it is not giving up much, either, for there is not a single soul in London now."

"My goodness, papa, how you do talk!" replied the indignant Patty, more affected by this last statement than by anything which had preceded it. "Why, 'twas a perfect crowd that we drove through last night; and if you would but take lodgings in some street where I could look out of the window and see the people, I should not care for anything, almost."

"You are too humble-minded by half, my darling," replied Mr. O'Donagough, chucking her under the chin. "You shan't only look at the people, but all the people shall look at you, if you'll let me have my way without grumbling. The people you saw last night, Patty, were nothing but a parcel of clerks and milliners' girls, who have no longer anything to do in their shops, because all the fine folks are out of town."

"I don't care what they were," replied his daughter, with great animation; "I am sure they were as handsome and elegant-looking as possible; and at any rate it must be better to see them than that nasty old dustman there, with his horrid bell."

"Patty!" said her father, gravely, "you are not half so quick and clever as I fancied you were. I thought I had made you understand how being careful and saving at one time, could enable one to be grand and gay at another.

But you talk now like a mere child, and if you go on so I must treat you as such. I suppose you really are not old enough yet to comprehend the advantage of this sort of management."

"Yes, but I am, though," replied Patty, tartly; "and I'll be bound for it, if you would tell me, just once for all, what you will give us to spend in a year, I'd manage to show off with it quite as well as you, and never set us down in such a nasty, dark, dull place as this, neither."

"*Just once for all*, Patty, won't do for me. There is no need to enter with you into any long explanation concerning my affairs. Girls can't possibly understand the subject, nor women either, for that matter, because they are never brought up to it. So I hope neither your mother nor you will torment me with any questions, but be contented with what you can get, and thankful that you belong to a man who never leaves a stone unturned if he thinks he can find money under it."

"But I suppose I may walk out, sir?" said the little-pleased Patty, almost blubbering.

"Yes, you may walk, but I should very strongly recommend you both not to show yourselves now, pranked out just as I hope you will appear when I am receiving lords and baronets at my house—you will do yourselves a monstrous deal of harm by it, I can tell you. But I believe it is easier to stop the wind from blowing, than a woman's ribbons from flapping."

At this moment Mrs. O'Donagough entered the room, and instantly perceiving from the countenance of the young lady that something was wrong, she ventured to say in an accent which did not manifest any decided determination to take part with either,

"What's the matter now?"

"I have only been giving Miss Patty a hint or two as to the patient endurance of a cheap lodging, till I see right and fit to put her into a dear one," said Mr. O'Donagough.

"You had better leave her to me, Donny," replied his lady; "whatever I tell her is right, that she will do."

"That's more than I'll promise, unless I happen to like it," said Patty, recovering her vivacity, and giving so saucy a wink with the eyelid still under her command, as to throw her father into an ecstasy of laughter.

"Come, come, that's all right again; if my beauty does not get into the sulks, we shall get through the next two or three months in no time, and then you shall blaze away, both of you, as you never blazed before," said Mr. O'Donagough; adding in a rather mysterious tone, "You have no notion yet, either of you, what I have got in my head to do for your pleasure and profit. But if I hear any grumbling it will spoil all, mind

that. If you trouble me now, or ever, with questions—observe, I speak to both of you alike—if you trouble me now or ever with any questions whatever, about my goings on, or what I mean to do, or what I mean not to do, by Jove, I'll take myself off! You are able to get at your own money now, my Barnaby," he continued, in an accent of perfect good-humour, "as well as before you married me, and I give you credit for your cleverness; but one advantage of this is, you know, that you can do without me. Now, don't fancy, either of you, that I am angry, or want to get rid of you—for I don't—quite the contrary. If things go as I wish, my wife and daughter will count for something. So come and kiss me, Patty, and remember that the better you behave, the smarter you shall be when the fine folks come to town again."

It would have been difficult for Mr. O'Donagough, or any gentleman under similar circumstances, to have pronounced an harangue more calculated to obtain the objects he desired. Had he scolded, they would probably have scolded again; had he blustered, they might have rebelled; but promises, threats, and mystery together, formed a chain most admirably calculated to lead ladies captive; and even before any opportunity had been given for them to consult together, both mother and daughter had respectively made up their minds to behave well.

"I think I will sit down at once to my satin stitch, Patty," said Mrs. O'Donagough; "it's always wrong to waste time. That cloak will be perfectly magnificent, if ever I live to finish it, and it is likely enough that it may be useful to you, or to me, one of these days. And if I was you, darling, I'd set about turning that pretty green silk dress that the sea faded so abominably; it will look as good as new, Patty, if you do the job nicely."

"Yes, I will," replied Patty almost meekly, and dutifully turning her steps towards the door to seek the employment suggested; but before she opened it, she ventured to turn her head and say, "Do you think, mamma, we shall be able to get any novels to read?"

"Upon my word, my dear, I don't know," was Mrs. O'Donagough's discreet reply, glancing at the same time a look of civil inquiry towards her husband.

"Novels?—To be sure you may; lots," replied Mr. O'Donagough, gaily. "I'm going out, and if you'll sit down to your needles, I'll find out the nearest circulating-library for you, and subscribe for three months."

"And will you bring back something, papa," said Patty, yawning, as she turned her eyes towards the one window, which, though it commanded an uninterrupted view of the window opposite, had little else to recommend it.

"I will if I can—but you must not expect me directly; I have too much to do to turn errand-boy just now, my beauty. You and your mother can stitch together for an hour or two, I know, without coming to the end of your talk. Why, you have got to hash up all that happened at Brighton; and when that's done and over, you may begin upon what you shall do, and what you shall say, and what you shall put on some three months hence, when you will be living in style and state again," replied Mr. O'Donagough.

Patty shrugged her shoulders, but left the room without a word; strong evidence that his judicious eloquence had not been thrown away upon her. When she returned to it with thimble, needles, cotton-box, and scissors in one hand, and a huge mass of miscellaneous trumpery in the other, she found her mamma alone, and already deeply occupied by the magnificent cloak.

"Pray do you intend to bear this, mamma?" said Patty, as soon as she had drawn forward the only movable table in the room, and placed it near the window. "Do you really intend to go on bearing this quietly?"

"Bear it? How am I to help bearing it?" replied Mrs. O'Donagough, sharply. "As if you did not know, girl, that I have no more power to help myself than this needle has. Where I choose to push it there it must go; and where he chooses to put us, there we must stay; and if you know any cure for it, I hope you will tell me, that's all. Ain't these leaves perfect, Patty?"

"I am sure I shall hang myself if it is to last for three months," rejoined her daughter, without indicating the least emotion at sight of the perfect satin-stitch. "Mind! I give you fair warning, mother; I shall either hang myself or run away."

"And pray, Miss Patty, why do you not tell your papa so, instead of trying to bother me worse than I am bothered already?" demanded Mrs. O'Donagough.

"Why, just because you are the gentleman's wife, ma'am, and ought to be able to manage him, to be sure," replied Patty. "But do you think if I was to fall sick, it might do any good?" she added very gravely.

"No, my dear, not the least in the world;" replied her mother. "He's tiresome enough, and tyrant enough too, sometimes; but to give him his due, I don't believe that what he is doing now is for the sake of teasing us. I am sure he means to blaze away, as he says, by-and-by, in fine style; and I don't know but he's right, Patty, after all; for I'd rather, ten times over, live hugger-mugger fashion, as we are now, if it's only to last for a time, and then show off afterwards, than go on, on, for ever the same, just decent and respectable, and never making people wonder or admire from first to last."

"Ay, ay, mamma, that's all very true, and I understand it just as well as you do; but you'll please to remember that I'm in my teens, and that what's mighty easy to you, is just like death and distraction to me. Mercy upon me! only fancy me staying on, for three months at one go, in a dark linen frock, and without a man, young or old, tall or short, handsome or ugly, to look at me. I know I can't bear it—I know I shall be after some prank or other to help myself."

"I wish you would mind what you are about, Patty, and not talk so wild," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, who, with the increasing wisdom of advancing age, was able to pursue her work tranquilly, even though she too was in a dark linen dress, and conscious that under her present circumstances, she could look neither like the beauty she had been, nor the woman of fashion she was. "I wish, Patty," said she, "that you would be more steady at your work. Remember, my dear, that you are growing taller and stouter every day; and if you don't mind, you'll notch these turnings in so, in the unpicking, that you'll never be able to make the frock up again big enough to get into. Do mind what you are about."

"I'll tell you what, ma'am," replied the lively girl, "if you take to scolding, I'm off. I'll be hanged if I won't walk up and down the street before the door, if you make this little pig sty too hot to hold me." And so saying, she pushed her work from her, and throwing up the dusty sash, thrust out her head to reconnoitre the promenade to which she threatened to betake herself.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed, drawing it back again, after taking a melancholy survey up the street and down the street; "what a nasty hideous hole we are got into! The air smells of nothing but dust, and there isn't a soul to be seen except an old man driving a cabbage cart, and two dogs drawing a barrow with dirty rags and old bottles in it." Yet even these objects appeared to have more attraction for the weary Patty, than the operation of dress-turning; for again she thurst forward her head, and remained for some minutes without changing her attitude. At length she drew back a step, while such a blush suffused her fair and ample cheeks as might have convinced her mamma, had she chanced to look up, that something besides the cabbage-cart and the wheelbarrow had met her eye. At the same moment a short, sharp knock at the door was keenly audible through the open window.

"That's your father come back, I suppose," said Mrs. O'Donagough.

"No, it isn't," replied Patty.

"Did you see who it was then?" demanded her mother.

"I saw it was a man, and not a bit like papa," responded the

young lady in a whisper, and at the same moment she went to the parlour-door and partially opened it, so as to permit her peeping out without being herself seen.

"He must be the first-floor lodger, for he came in and went straight up stairs without saying a word," said Patty, retreating from the door with her face in a blaze; "and pretty well he squinted at our door as he passed; but I'm sure he saw nothing of me but my nose."

"I suppose he saw you through the window, miss," said her mamma; "but you mustn't stare out into the street that way in London, I can tell you."

"That's because the street is so monstrous gay, I suppose," replied her daughter. "Hadn't you better put me on blinkers, mamma?"

"Come, come, Patty, shut down the window, and settle quietly to your work, or upon my life and honour I'll tell your father what a plague you are," said Mrs. O'Donagough.

And much good you'll get by that, won't you, mamma?" replied Patty. "However, I'll settle down presently if you won't make a fuss; but I must go up stairs first, for I have forgot something;" and so saying, she ran out of the room without waiting for a reply.

The heiress of Mr. O'Donagough was no great songstress; but, for some reason or other, she took it into her head to be musical, as she walked deliberately up the stairs, singing "Cherry ripe," very distinctly, if not very skilfully; and the consequence was, that just as she reached the first-floor landing, the door of the front room opened, and a tall olive-coloured man, with enormous black eyes, and a prodigious quantity of hair to match, became visible at it.

Patty started, ceased her song, somewhat hastened her step, and passed on, but not so rapidly as to be unconscious of her fellow-lodger's politeness; for he bowed profoundly, and looked at her with his widely-opened great eyes, as if he admired her very much. On reaching her own apartment, which was the back-room of the second-floor, she seated herself with some degree of agitation on her trunk. "Lord, how I wish Matilda Perkins was here!" murmured Patty, as soon as she had, in some degree, recovered her breath and her composure. "I'll bet a guinea she'd make a good guess in a minute as to what sort of chap that is—what eyes! He's as dark as an Indian, but he's monstrous handsome for all that, and I'm sure he's a gentleman from his bowing so beautifully." This soliloquy was thought, not spoken; and it was silently that Patty sat

Revolving in her altered soul

the possibility of amusing herself, even there, if she could but

get at her dear friend to help her. After a few moments thus spent, she arose, determined to attack her mother and her father too, firmly and with proper spirit, on the absolute necessity of her having somebody to speak to, and the atrocity of which they would be guilty, if they would not give her leave to set off that very day for Belle-Vue-terrace, Brompton, in search of her friend Matilda.

In pursuance of this resolution, she re-entered the parlour with a slow and steady step, which had something grave and determined in it. She seated herself silently at the table, resumed her work, and for some minutes remained opening seams, and picking out threads so demurely, that her mother, though at that moment particularly engaged in newly adjusting her pattern, looked up to see what she was about; but perceiving her serious air, only said, "There's a good girl, just keep on in that way till dinner-time, and the worse part of your job will be over."

"Mamma!" said Patty, solemnly, "I am not thinking of my job."

"And why not, for goodness' sake? I'm sure you can think of nothing better, Patty. How beautiful the colour is where the sun hasn't come! You'll have a lovely frock again, if you will only take a little pains."

"It is no good to talk to me of frocks and colours," said Patty, in a voice of sedate melancholy, "while you are making me as miserable as you do now. I am quite sure I shall do some mischief to myself if you and papa persevere to keep me on in this way, without a single soul to speak to. I tell you fairly, mamma, I can't bear it, and I won't."

"What do you expect to get by flying at me, Patty?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, with considerable symptoms of irritation.

"It is no good putting yourself in a passion, mamma," replied Patty, with very impressive quietness. "I am sure I am in no passion myself. What I feel has nothing to do with temper, or anything of the kind. I have been thinking very seriously about it. Everybody must know themselves better than anybody else can know them, and I feel quite sure that I shall not live, or at any rate that I shall go out of my senses, if papa goes on with me in this way. I dare say there are many people who could bear it better than I can, and I am sure I wish that I was like them, for papa's sake, and for yours, for I don't want to vex either of you—but I am as nature made me, you know, and I can't help it."

"Good gracious, Patty! How grave and solemn you do talk!" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, looking up at her with all the surprise, and some of the alarm which the young lady had intended to produce. "What on earth would you have me do.

my dear? I would wish to be as watchful over you as ever mother was—I never did think of myself at any time of my life—everybody that ever knew me would do me the justice to say that, and it is hardly likely that I should be less generous and devoted to my own daughter than to other people; but I no more know how to get you out of this place, before your father chooses to take you, than I know how to turn copper into gold."

"It is not altogether the place that I hate so much, mamma," replied Patty; "I dare say I should have sense enough to get the better of that; but it is the being so dreadful dull and solitary, without a single friend in the world to speak to. I should be perfectly contented if you would only let me go and see Matilda Perkins."

"I am sure, my dear Patty, I should have no objection if it depended only upon me—though I can't say but what I should feel a little small at being seen in such a place as this by people who have met General Hubert at my house. However, I could easily make up my mind to bear that for your sake, my dear—and I can't but say it would be a comfort and some sort of relief, too, for me to have that good creature, Louisa, to speak to now and then, especially if your father would let me tell her that we were going to be dashing again by and by. But how can I tell what he may say to it, Patty? All I can do is to promise I'll be no spoke in your wheel, and if he chooses to ask my opinion, I'll take care it shall go the right way."

"I'm not going to ask you, mamma," responded Patty, with a deep sigh. "I have made up my mind to speak to papa myself, and I know perfectly well what I shall say to him. But I suppose it will be hours before he comes back. I wish you would put up your work just for a few minutes, mamma, and take a turn with me up and down the street. I'm sure I don't care about going any further; I only want a little air. Don't you think it is very close here?"

"Yes, I do, indeed—and when I think of poor dear Brighton, I positively feel half choked. I really think a little walk will do us both good;" and Mrs. O'Donagough began to roll up her work.

"Very well, then," cried Patty, briskly, "I'll run up and put my things on." And this time, as she mounted the stairs, she sang the merrier roundelay of

> I won't be a nun—I can't be a nun.
> I am so fond of pleasure that I must not be a nun.

Again a manly step was heard to traverse the little drawing-room, again the door opened, and once more the olive-coloured stranger appeared at it, respectfully bowing, as before, when he

beheld the young lady passing before it. On perceiving this, Patty felt convinced that in common civility she was bound to return the salutation; and she did so by smiling, blushing, shaking her curls, and bowing her head. A quarter of this abounding gratitude would have sufficed to assure the Spanish language-master, for such he was, that not alone the bright valleys of his own sunny land were peopled by dark-browed and very benignant young ladies, but that even the chilling blasts of the north could not prevent the effect of a wondering Hidalgo's eyes, if he did but know how to use them.

Having gained her apartment, Patty placed herself before the glass, and laughed at her own blushing image there, as she recollected the looks of profound respect and admiration which it had just called forth. She waited not to consult her mamma, as to which of her three bonnets she had best put on, lest her father's doctrine respecting the eligibility of occasionally adopting the obscure incognito style, should be pleaded in mitigation of feathers and flowers; and long enough before Mrs. O'Donagough's majestic person had reached the altitude at which she herself stood, Patty was already decked in what she considered as her most becoming finery.

"Good gracious! my dear, how smart you are! I had no notion you meant to put on your best bonnet. I am sure if your father sees us, we shall catch it. You know what his notions are about that matter, Patty," said the dutiful wife and watchful mother.

"I don't care a straw what his notions are, mamma," replied her daughter. "When I have got a good thing I shall wear it whenever I think fit. You don't suppose that papa intends to make such a Bessy Dingle of himself as to tell us every morning what clothes we are to put on before night, do you?"

"My goodness, Patty, how you do chop and change about!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough. "Have I not heard you tell him over and over that you admired his plan of being shabby, and saving when we were out of sight?"

"Well; and so I do," answered Patty, colouring a little. "But in London one can never be sure that one is quite out of sight, you know."

Not aware how special an observation this was, Mrs. O'Donagough permitted it to produce considerable effect; for she laid aside a shabby old shawl in which she was about to envelop herself, and substituted one of scarlet, which had been purchased expressly for the Brighton campaign. And now, being fully equipped, they set off; Patty descending the stairs not only without singing, but without suffering the patter of her feet to be as audible as usual; nevertheless the olive-tinted

stranger, who seemed to be the most watchful and attentive of language-masters, heard enough to bring him to his door, and somewhat to the young lady's dismay, his dark visage and enormous eyes appeared exactly at the moment when Mrs. O'Donagough was passing it.

It seemed that the encountering an old lady instead of a young one was more than the gentleman's nerves could stand, for he instantly stepped back and closed the door. "There is some truth in what you say, Patty, about London. One never can tell who may be there, and who may not. I am monstrous glad I have got my scarlet shawl on," were the words uttered by Mrs. O'Donagough, as she descended to the street-door; but they did not all reach the ear of her daughter, and the gentle damsel nestled to the side of her parent, as they commenced their walk, eager to hear the observations which the apparition of the sable head might give rise to.

"He must be an African or a Chinese, Patty, or something of that distant kind I should guess," resumed Mrs. O'Donagough, as they walked on; "yet I can't, for my life, help thinking that he is monstrous handsome, though he *is* so near being a blackamore. Did you get a peep at him?"

"At who, mamma?" said Patty, innocently.

"At the lodger on the first floor, my dear. Didn't you see the door open as we came down?"

"I suppose it was while I was running up stairs for my pocket handkerchief," replied Patty.

"Well, then, you must contrive to see him some day or other, child, for it is the most remarkable face I ever beheld; I should not wonder to hear anybody say that he was horridly frightful, and yet for the life of me I can't help thinking him monstrously handsome."

"I am sure, mamma, I should like to see him of all things," replied her daughter; "but I don't know how. I can't walk into his room, you know."

"Lor-a-mercy, no!" returned the mother, with great animation. "I beg and desire, Patty, that you won't speak in any such flighty way about him. I am quite certain he is not the sort of person for any nonsense of that kind. If he lodges in the house, you will be sure to see him, sooner or later, I dare say, without playing any mad pranks to contrive it."

Patty received this rebuke in silence, and walked on. It had been her intention, when inviting her mamma to take the air, to cross the street, and parade up and down leisurely on the other side of it; thereby giving an opportunity to the first-floor gentleman to see them out of the window if he liked it; but she was too sensible a girl to persevere in this project now, and

they languidly pursued their way to Regent-street, first streaming along to the top of it, and then down again.

Nothing could be a greater proof that the mind of the fair Patty was preoccupied than the indifference with which she gazed into the shop-windows; but with her mother it was otherwise. Notwithstanding the stifling heat and dust of a fine October day in London, Mrs. O'Donagough's energies all returned, as she contemplated the glories, faded and waning as they were, which every step presented to her view. "Oh, Patty!" she exclaimed at length, "what are you thinking of? Did you ever in all your days see anything so heavenly beautiful as these shops. Just look at those coloured muslins! How they do make one long! Don't they?"

"To be sure they do," replied Patty, roused at last, and throwing, as it were, all her recovered soul through the plate-glass barrier that separated her from the objects in question. "But it makes one sick and miserable to look at them without a single sixpence in one's pocket. I declare I'd rather be dead than going on as I am now!" This melancholy reflection, and her own pathetic expression of it, recalled to the memory of the fair mourner the necessity of managing ably her projected attack upon the heart of her father; and no sooner did she think of this, than the injury which her gay dress might produce, should they chance to meet him, struck her forcibly.

"Let us go home now, mamma," said she, in a tone of great depression and fatigue. "Upon my word I am so tired, I can hardly stand." Mrs. O'Donagough could willingly have walked and gazed a while longer, but she yielded to this urgent entreaty, and they returned in time for Patty to prepare herself for the reception of her papa.

There was considerable cleverness displayed in her manner of doing this. She knew she could not turn pale, and she was very sorry for it; but all she could do, she did. She pushed back her redundant locks behind her ears, and made them hang as disconsolately as their nature would permit; she practised before the glass a sort of heavy, heart-broken look, dressed herself in a dirty faded suit, and then crept down stairs so quietly as to escape the keen ears of the Spaniard, whom she by no means wished to encounter in such a trim. Having placed herself in an attitude of great weariness and dejection, she awaited her father's return in such pertinacious stillness that she very nearly fell asleep; but he entered at a favourable moment, real heaviness assisting that which was assumed, and giving her the appearance of being in a very deplorable condition.

"Mercy on me, Patty! what's the matter with you?" exclaimed Mr. O'Donagough. "I hope," he added, turning to

his wife, "that she is not going to have the smallpox, or measles, or anything of that sort! Have you got a head-ache, my dear?"

"Yes, papa, my head aches very bad," replied Patty, in a gentle voice. "I believe people have always got the head-ache when they are as miserable as me!"

"Miserable! why what have you been doing to her, Mrs. O'D.? You haven't been scolding and badgering her, I hope? You know I don't approve of it, and I won't have it."

"No, dear papa, that is not it," said Patty, drawing out her pocket-handkerchief, "mamma has nothing whatever to do with it; but my very heart is broken, at thinking that I am in London, and can't see the only friend I ever had in the world. I should not mind anything if you would only let me go and call upon Matilda Perkins!"

Mr. O'Donagough threw a glance round the room, and then at the personal decorations of his wife and daughter.

"Do you really wish, Patty, to let your friends see you in this changed condition?" said he, gravely, but without harshness. "When they saw you last, you looked like a duchess; and now darling, upon my word you look like her housemaid. Don't you think it would be better to wait till we are up again?"

"Wait for three months, papa, without seeing Matilda Perkins? I am sure it will kill me, I am certain that I can't bear it." And here Patty applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

"*I wonder any man alive would ever rear a daughter*," sang Mr. O'Donagough, laughing, and attempting to withdraw the handkerchief from the bright orbs he so greatly admired. "Come, Patty, don't be a fool! Look up, and be a good girl, and we'll contrive some way or other about seeing the Perkinses. But I must not have all my plots and plans spoiled either, mind that, if you please."

"I am sure I don't want to spoil anything, papa!" replied Patty; "only let me see Matilda, and I'll tell her anything in the world that you like!"

"There's a darling! Very well, Patty, you shall go with your mother, and call upon them to-morrow morning, if you will; only you must dress yourselves nice, and tell them that you came into town entirely to see them, for that you are in lodgings at Richmond, till your London house is ready.—No, no, upon second thoughts, you had better say that we are staying with friends at Richmond, or else perhaps they might expect to be invited. Do you understand, Patty?"

"Yes, papa, perfectly; and I shall like all that very much; a great deal better than letting them suppose that we are

actually living in such a place as this. And nothing can be easier, you know, than telling them exactly whatever you please about it; only I shan't at all get the sort of comfort I want if I am only to go once, and have no place where I may tell Matilda to call upon me in return."

"It is my turn now," said Mrs. O'Donagough. "I have not said a word yet; but if you will listen to me, both of you, I'll engage for it I will manage the business better than either."

"And likely enough, too, my Barnaby," gaily replied her husband, who for some reason or other had returned in excellent spirits. "Likely enough, Patty, she'll beat us both at a plot. So say your say, Mrs. O'D., and let us see how we can contrive to let the beauty have her way without interfering with what I have laid down as firmly as the laws of the Medes and Persians."

"Well, then, Donny, I'll tell you what we must say to the Perkinses. First, we'll begin by letting them know that we have been invited to stay with some very elegant friends at Richmond, and I can put in a word or two about our all enjoying it so very much. And then we'll go on to say that there is but one drawback, which is the inconvenience of the distance from town just at the time when we have so much to do in preparing a house for the winter and spring; and then I can say that dear Mr. O'Donagough is so dreadfully afraid of my being over fatigued that he has taken a little bit of an out-of-the-way lodgings, just for us to sleep in, whenever it happened that we were too much knocked up by a day's shopping to be able to return to Richmond the same night. And then, you know, nothing will be easier, at any time, than to fix a day for their calling, by saying, come Monday, come Tuesday, for we have made appointments with tradespeople, which will oblige us to be in town."

"Well done, Barnaby!" exclaimed Mr. O'Donagough, slapping her on the back, and laughing heartily. "Isn't your mother a capital hand, Patty? In that way, my dear, you may see this dear friend of yours, three times in a week, if you like it."

"And I should not make the least objection," observed Mrs. O'Donagough, "to her passing a day or two at a time with them, if they happened to invite her. The change would do her a deal of good, dear creature; and the Perkinses are such perfectly proper people, that there could be no reason in the world against it."

This was an idea that made Patty's eyes sparkle again, as brightly as before they were rubbed by her pocket-handkerchief; and with such a prospect before her, and a delicious new novel, called "The Doubtful One," to fill up all mental interstices,

when her own meditations had been sufficiently indulged, the day passed away without another sigh or groan being heard from her.

## CHAPTER XX.

As Mrs. O'Donagough herself was very little better acquainted with the general localities of London than her young daughter, there were but two methods by which they could hope to reach the desired bourn of Belle-Vue-terrace, Brompton, in safety; the one being by the guidance of a hackney-coachman—the other, by that of Mr. O'Donagough. The gentleman preferred the latter, as being the least costly of the two; only premising before they set out that they should both of them take such heed to their ways as might suffice to direct their return, he having business to do, which made it quite impossible he could remain during their visit. This very reasonable condition was readily agreed to, and the conversation *en route* consisted chiefly of observations relative to it.

"Take notice you turn to the right at the bottom of Regent-street."—"Now observe both of you, this is Piccadilly," *et cætera, et cætera.*

At length the street and the number indicated in Patty's pocket-book were reached, and their anxious inquiries for the Miss Perkinses answered by the agreeable information that they were at home.

Mr. O'Donagough then departed, and his wife and daughter mounted to the drawing-room. The active *grisette* of the mansion, whose lightest labour was that of gentleman woman-usher to the Miss Perkinses, may be excused if she found the difficulties of the name insurmountable, and announced them as Mrs. and Miss Hodnago.

The two sisters, who had just had time enough to finish the arrangements, embellishments, and general setting to rights of their little apartment, were sitting very snugly, and in the most lady-like manner, each at her own separate window, each with a little round-table before her, and each employed upon some sort of necessary and important needlework.

On hearing the door opened they both looked up, and on hearing the name of Mrs. and Miss Hodnago, they both made a grimace, and ejaculated,

"Who?"

But ere it could be repeated the glorious vision of their Brighton grandee friend, sailing into the room with all her wonted majesty, and followed by her blooming daughter, met their view; and in the same instant, both sisters, as if moved by

springs governed by one wire, clasped their hands, started up, and exclaimed,

"Oh, goodness!"

The only difference was, that the more ardent feelings of the younger propelled her forward with a vehemence which overturned her little table, and brought to view a couple of circulating library volumes which had nestled amidst the stockings and frills with which they were covered.

Miss Matilda and Patty were, as may be imagined, speedily locked in each other's arms, nor did Mrs. O'Donagough fail to display her habitually caressing propensities; but, making direct for the slender Louisa, infolded her lank form with an energy that for a moment deprived her of breath. Many and fervent were the exclamations of delight which were uttered as soon as the hugging was over, and the four ladies seemed to vie with each other in the strength of the epithets by which they expressed their ecstasy at this re-union. For some time the eloquence of each was uttered for the good of all; but then Patty began to remember the thousand things she had to say which were calculated for the ear of Matilda alone, and she grew fidgety and restless, till she had contrived to draw her confidant to the most distant part of the small apartment; but even there she was far from being at ease, feeling suspicious that if she spoke loud enough to be heard by her, it was nearly impossible that the others should not hear her too.

"Could you not take me into your own room for a minute, Matilda?" she said, abruptly.

"Yes, to be sure, dearest!" replied her faithful friend; "it is only the next door."

And arm-in-arm they prepared to leave the apartment together; when, just as they reached the door, Patty remembered that it would be absolutely necessary that Matilda should be made acquainted with the history invented for the entire use and service of herself and her sister, and conscious that she remembered not one-half of it, she suddenly stopped and said,

"I am going with Matilda into her room for half a minute, mamma; but I wish, before we go, you would tell them both all about our being in London and out of it, as one may call it, and all the rest of it, you know, mamma, about our beautiful house that we are going to have—because when she and I are together we never speak of anything but our own particular talk, and yet I should like for her to know all about it too."

The quick-witted Mrs. O'Donagough comprehended the state of her daughter's mind in a moment; and equally pleased by her prudence, and the opportunity it gave herself of indulging a little in the imaginative style of narrative in which she delighted, she replied, briskly,

"To be sure I will! I want to tell them both exactly how we are situated. Sit down, dear Matilda, for one minute, and then you shall run off with Patty, if you will."

Matilda expressed, with the warmest gratitude, her earnest desire to hear everything she would be pleased to have the kindness to say; and seating herself close by Patty, took loving possession of her arm, while Mrs. O'Donagough explained "her situation," as she called it, as follows:—

"The fact is, my dear girls," she began, "we want, like many other people of some little consequence in this foolish world, to be in two places at once; and the consequence is, that we can hardly be said to be positively in either. A family of high fashion, distant relations of the Huberts, and therefore of mine, have taken for the summer a magnificent place near Richmond, and nothing will content them but that Mr. O'Donagough, myself, and Patty should pass a month or two with them there. Now most assuredly nothing on earth could be more agreeable than this proposal, if it were not that we have such an immense deal of business upon our hands, in consequence of our determination to take a house, and furnish it from top to bottom. Mr. O'Donagough is a man of great taste, and perhaps rather too fond of magnificence; and I therefore feel it to be absolutely necessary, and quite a duty for me to be with him when he is ordering everything; for if I am not, I feel sure that he will be running into immoderate expense. Not that I have the least wish to prevent his having everything exceedingly elegant about him; a man of his family and fortune, of course, has a right to it, and Heaven forbid that I should wish to prevent it; only, you know, my dears, that there is nothing like a prudent wife for keeping a man out of mischief when he happens to have a decided taste for expense. So I have told O'Donagough fairly, that I will not give my consent to his taking the house, or purchasing any of the furniture, particularly the mirrors, chandeliers, and so forth, unless I am with him. And I have promised, delightful as our home at Richmond is, that I will constantly come to town once or twice a week for this purpose; and this promise I am determined to keep, however troublesome it may be. But poor, dear fellow! he is so excessively kind and affectionate, that he cannot endure the idea of my over-fatiguing myself; and if you will believe me, he has actually taken a little bit of a lodging, where Patty and I may have a bed whenever we feel too tired with our morning's shopping to return with pleasure to our gay party at Richmond. Is not this kind and thoughtful of him?"

"Oh, dear! it's quite beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Louisa, fervently.

"What a husband!" exclaimed Matilda, with a sigh.

"I do assure you, my dears, that the hope of seeing you now and then by this means, is one great reason for my approving it; and poor, dear Patty is quite in raptures with the plan on that account."

"We can never thank you half enough for all your kindness to us," said Miss Matilda, pressing the hand of her friend, and at the same time yielding to a hint, conveyed by a nudge of the elbow, that they might now retire.

"I am so delighted that I have got you to myself once more, my dearest, dearest Patty!" cried Matilda, embracing her friend anew, as soon as she had succeeded in getting her to the little space before the window, which the navigation round the bed rendered no easy task. "Oh, how my heart beats to ask you a few questions! Tell me, dearest girl, did you see much of Foxcroft after we came away?"

"Oh, yes, Matilda—he never missed a day. Papa and he are thicker friends than ever. You'll be sure to see him at our house—that is, you know, when we have got one in town, of our own."

"What a delicious idea! It positively takes my breath away. But tell me, dearest, for pity's sake, tell me, did he ever speak of me?"

"Lots. He asked more questions, I promise you, than we could answer, about your family and fortune, and whether you had any mother, father, uncles, aunts, brothers, and the Lord knows what. It certainly does look rather particular. But I say, Matilda, is this great large bed all for you? Because if it is, you might give me half of it, you know, some day when papa and mamma were gone down to——what's the name of the place?"

"I wish to goodness it was, dearest! But, unfortunately, it is the only bed-room we have. We just take what is called in London the drawing-room floor, and no more," replied her friend.

"So then I suppose that's no go," observed the disappointed Patty, rather gloomily. "However, I have got hundreds of things to say to you, and somehow or other we must contrive to be together. Oh, Matilda! we have got such a man in our house! The house, I mean, where papa has taken the rooms for us to sleep, you know. Such a man, Matilda, as I never saw in all my born days. Not that he is one quarter as beautiful as my dear Jack; for, in the first place, he is as yellow as a guinea, and his face is almost entirely covered with coal-black hair. But then he has such a beautiful nose, and such a pair of eyes! If I can't show him to you, I shall die."

"Alas, dearest Patty! there is but one I care for now. Talk to me of my poor Foxcroft, if you love me! Tell me how he looks?"

"Looks, my dear? Why he looks much as usual, I believe. Don't be angry, Matilda; but I can't, for the life of me, think how you came to fall in love with such a red nose as he has got, and ever so much gray in his hair besides."

Miss Matilda Perkins coloured violently, and, for one moment, there was danger that the wounded spirit might burst forth, and utter words which would have smothered and destroyed the friendship which united them—for ever! But better, calmer, wiser, thoughts succeeded, and ere Patty could be quite sure that her dear Matilda was in a passion, that tender-hearted creature had so far conquered her emotion, as to produce a little nervous titter, and reply,

"What is one man's meat, you know, my dear, is another man's poison. It would be very dreadful, Patty, if we all thought alike about people. Good gracious! what would have become of me if all men saw with young Mr. Compton Hubert's eyes, for instance? In that case, poor dear Foxcroft's eyes would never have been turned my way; and yet you must allow, my darling girl, that he seemed to admire me most?"

There was upon the very little table which stood in the window of the Miss Perkinses' bed-room a very little looking-glass, and upon this Patty silently turned a sidelong glance before she answered her friend's appeal, and then, with all the good-humour which a broad grin could convey, she replied,

"Oh! to be sure, Matilda. How could he help it?"

But ere this was uttered, the rapid action of thought had restored to Matilda the entire possession of her senses. She

——————— found her fair soul,
And so to find,

of necessity rendered it impossible to quarrel with her friend.

"Ah! you beautiful wicked little creature," she said, playfully laying a forefinger on each of Patty's rosy cheeks; "you know well enough that as for beauty, there is not one girl in ten thousand that can be compared to you; but the goodness of Providence is too great, Patty, to let all men fix their hearts on one, let her be ever so beautiful, and that is the reason why, as they say, every Jack can find his Gill. Such as you, Patty, to be sure, may pick and choose; but a poor good sort of a warm-hearted girl like me, ought to, and always does, receive gratefully the love of a generous and affectionate man, even if he does happen to have a large nose, and a few gray hairs into the bargain. But don't let us talk any more of me. Tell me, darling, all that has happened to you since we parted. Did you go on with the three walks every day upon the pier?"

"Good gracious! no, Matilda. How could I, with nobody

on earth to walk with? That's the plague of it now, you see. Papa talks of London being empty—but lor-a-mercy! I only wish that I could get acquainted with just one out of every twenty of the well-dressed, elegant-looking people I meet; I could get up a ball in no time. Will you believe it, Matilda, I have never danced a step, so fond as I am of it, since I came to England? and I did think when we got to London, I should get a dance now and then. But one might just as well be in the woods for anything I see."

"It is a dreadful dull season, my dear, just now," replied her friend; "but when you get into your fine new house in London, Patty, you will have dancing enough, I'll engage for it. Do you waltz, dearest?"

"No, I never learned—but mamma says I shall," replied Patty.

"I dote upon waltzing!" resumed the animated Matilda. "I would not confess as much to all the world, Patty; but I have been taking lessons since—since I was grown up, and I should so delight in teaching you!"

"Oh! I am to have a man-master, mamma says; but I should like well enough to practise the steps with you first. How hard it is that we cannot be together!" observed Patty.

"And what walks we could have together!" responded her friend. "Have you been to hear the band play at the Horse Guards yet, my dear?"

"My goodness, no! I have heard nothing, and seen nothing, either, except my beautiful black and yellow man in the drawing-room," said Patty, mournfully.

"How we could enjoy ourselves, to be sure!" resumed Matilda. "There are a hundred and fifty things that we could do and see together. I wonder if Louisa—" she added, musingly; but there she stopped, and Patty stood anxiously watching her lips, to catch what might pass them next; for she guessed in a moment that her friend was revolving the possibility of turning her elder sister out of bed to make room for her.

"Dearest Matilda! tell me what you are thinking of?" burst from her at last—for Matilda still pondered silently on the difficulties of the case.

"Come back into the drawing-room, Patty," she said at length, in a voice that betokened doubt and agitation, "and let me bring Louisa in here, to speak to her for one minute;" and as she spoke, she made her way round the bed-post, Patty following in silence.

"There is somebody wants to speak to you, Louisa; will you step out for a moment?" said the younger to the elder sister: and though she meant to speak in a tone of great indifference and composure, there was something in her manner

which made Miss Louisa instantly jump up, though Mrs. O'Donagough was in the midst of a most interesting description of the splendour of the Peters' family, and exclaim as she left the room,

"Goodness, Matilda! what is the matter?"

"Matter, my dear! How foolish you are! There is nothing at all the matter; only I wanted to ask you, Louisa, if you thought it possible that you could sleep for a night or two on the little sofa in the drawing-room. This dear girl is so longing to come to us! and I *know* the connection to be so immensely important to us both; but, of course, particularly to me, Louisa, because of their great intimacy with poor dear Foxcroft. Do you think you could manage it? Patty says she is certain that he will be continually with them, for he is going to be quartered close to London. Oh, Louisa, think what I must feel! Tell me, do you think it possible?"

"The sofa is so very small," said the gentle Louisa, piteously, "that I certainly don't think I could lie down upon it in any way whatever; but I'm sure I would not stand in your way for the world about Captain Foxcroft; only you know he is not in town yet, and I am so very apt to catch cold if I don't lie warm and comfortable."

"You don't understand my object," returned the vexed Matilda. "I know he is not in town yet, and may not be for months to come: but it is cultivating the intimacy with the O'Donagoughs that ought to be our great object now, and I see as plain as possible that for some reason or other it would be convenient for Patty to be left here for a day or two. Think, Louisa, what it will be when they have a house in town for them to feel that they have been under an obligation to us!"

"I would sooner put them under an obligation in any other way rather than have no bed to lie on," replied poor Louisa, with a sort of prophetic shiver.

"Very well, then, that matter's settled, and I dare say I shall never set my eyes on Foxcroft again!" cried Matilda, with strong emotion.

"Go back to them, Louisa, and say that I am not quite well. I cannot bear to meet the disappointed looks of poor Patty."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! what a sad business it always is about a bed to be sure! I wish with all my heart that my poor legs were not so long, and then I should not mind it," returned Louisa, with a melancholy aspect. "You are a good bit shorter than me, Matilda," she added, with sudden animation, "and as your heart is so much in it, perhaps you would not mind sleeping upon the little sofa yourself."

"Not the least in the world, Louisa. I am sure I would do that, or anything else, to please such friends as the O'Donagoughs; but to tell you the truth, I did not think that Patty would like to sleep with you so well as with me. You know you have never been on the same sort of footing with her, and I thought she would like to have all her little gossip out with me, before we get up of a morning."

"That's very likely, sister; but I don't think it is quite fair to lay such store upon it. Beggars can't always be choosers, you know," said Louisa, with a little approach to asperity.

"Beggars! beggars! Louisa!" ejaculated the greatly-shocked Matilda, in a sort of whispered scream, for she trembled at the idea of such a phrase being overheard by the aristocratic and high-minded Mrs. O'Donagough. "How can you use such frightful, such ungrateful language?"

"Well, my dear, say no more about it; ask your young friend to come, and we will manage with her as well as we can. Perhaps you can let me have the mattress out, Matilda, and one of the blankets, and then I could sleep very well, I dare say, on the drawing-room carpet. I am sure I would not stand in your way for the world, my dear, especially if you think it would make any difference about Captain Foxcroft."

This was said with the revulsion of feeling which good-natured people often show, when thinking that they have been rather cross, and it was received by the younger sister with a rapture of gratitude.

"That is just like yourself, Louisa! You are a perfect angel in temper, and I am sure you might have your choice among captains and majors too, if the men did but know their own interest. But if I *do* succeed this time, and I feel as if something whispered me that I should, if I do become Mrs. Foxcroft, you will have a brother who will be ready to repay all your kindness, and if I did not know that, I am sure I would never think of him."

The sisters then returned with all speed to the drawing-room, where Mrs. O'Donagough and Patty had been employed in looking out of the window and in muttering to each other their hopes and their fears concerning the result of the consultation; Patty having communicated her convictions respecting its subject to her mamma, concluding with a remark, that, if she were asked, she should certainly stay, whether her papa liked it or not.

"He did not say a word when you mentioned it, I marked that," said she; "but I'll make him say yes, if he's asked, or I'll know the reason why."

"My dearest Mrs. O'Donagough!" said Matilda, passing her sister at the door of the room and approaching the majestic lady she addressed with clasped hands and beseeching eyes, "My dearest Mrs. O'Donagough!, I have the very greatest favour in the world to beg of you, and if you will but grant it, I shall be grateful to you for ever and for ever!"

"And what may that be, Miss Matilda?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, with a condescending and very gracious smile.

"I hope you will not think me too bold and presuming," replied the fair spinster; "but my sister and I should be *so* delighted if you would let Miss O'Donagough pass a few days with us. Will you grant us this great pleasure, my dear ma'am? We will take the best possible care of her, you may depend upon it."

"You are very kind, I am sure," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, with a little laugh that seemed to say that the proposal was very droll and very unexpected. "What do you say to it, Patty?"

"Oh, mamma, I should like it of all things!" replied the young lady, hanging herself in her usual affectionate manner on the arm of her friend. "There is nobody in the world that I love so well as Matilda Perkins, and I shall dote upon staying with her."

"Well, then, I suppose we must go home and ask papa," rejoined her mother.

"What, my dear madam, go home to Richmond, and take dear Patty too, before we can get your answer! Oh, dear me, that will make it so long!"

"No, no, my dear Matilda, I do not mean that at all," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, laughing. "I have got such a trick of calling every place *home*, which I am going back to, if it is only for five minutes. But I'll tell you, my dear, how you may be very useful and get an answer about Patty, and, perhaps, take possession of her, all under one. The truth is, that Mr. O'Donagough brought us to your door, but was obliged to run away directly on account of having Lord—Lord—mercy on me!—I forget the name. But he had Lord somebody or other to meet. It is certain that he gave me the most exact directions possible how to find the way back to the rooms, where we put up when we come from Richmond; but if you'll believe me, I don't remember a single word of it. So I shall be monstrously glad, Matilda, if you will walk back with us."

"To be sure I will, with the very greatest pleasure," replied the delighted Matilda.

"And then, you know, if Donny is at home, we can ask for Patty's leave of absence, and if it is granted, why she may go back with you at once. I will take care to send her things after her."

This plan seemed to give universal satisfaction; for Miss Louisa, though invited to join the walking party, declined it, from feeling that she should thereby lose an excellent opportunity for making all domestic preparations; and Mrs. O'Donagough, her daughter, and her daughter's friend, set off for the incongruous purlieus of majestic Regent-street together.

In happy conformity to their wishes, they found that Mr. O'Donagough had just entered the house. No time was lost in making their petition, no time was lost in granting it; and within a minute afterwards, Patty was dragging her friend up the narrow stairs, in order, as she said, that she might help her to put up the things that were to be sent after her. But after mounting about a dozen stairs, the young lady paused, and whispered in her friend's ear, "Now, Matilda, if my blackbird is in his cage, I will show you what I can do by a song. *Cherry ripe, cherry ripe, ripe, ripe cherry,*" carolled Patty in very audible notes as she slowly mounted the last stairs leading to the drawing-room; and, as she expected, the door opened, and the apparition of the black head and yellow face was again visible at it. Patty started, ceased her song, and dropped the parasol she held in her hand.

"*Permettez moi,*" said the Spaniard, darting forward, and speaking in the universal jargon by which all nations seem to fancy they can be best understood, "*charmante donzella! permettez moi;*" and picking up the parasol, he presented it to her with a fascinating bow, at the same time permitting his great eyes to "look their fill," both at herself and her friend.

"Thank you, sir. You are very polite," said Patty, colouring; and having received her parasol with more than one smiling bow, she galloped up stairs, followed by her friend.

"Well, Matilda?" said she, closing the door as soon as they had entered her room.

"Oh, Patty! he *is* yellow to be sure. You don't mean to say that he is as well-looking as Foxcroft?" was the unsatisfactory reply to this eager appeal.

"Well, then, you *are* in love," said the disappointed Patty; "but at any rate, Matilda, you can tell me if you think he is a real gentleman?"

"Why, my dear girl, if I was you, I would not make any further acquaintance with him, unknown to your papa and mamma. I have lived in London so long, that I am rather used to see those kind of people, and I don't believe they are always gentlemen of rank and fortune," replied the discreet Matilda.

"Oh! as to that, I have made no acquaintance with him at all, as yet, please to observe—and there's no likelihood I should, if I am going to stay with you. But as to handsomeness, he's beautiful enough for a king, and that I'll stand to, say

what you will. But come along—that's all the finery I shall want, and mamma can put out the other things. I long for you and I to be walking by ourselves, and then we can talk and look about as much as we like."

"Won't you rest yourselves before you set out again?" said Mr. O'Donagough, upon their re-entering the parlour to say adieu.

"Oh no, thank ye, papa. We are not the least tired; are we, Matilda?" replied Patty.

"No, not the least," added her acquiescent friend; and after a few words between the mother and daughter respecting the packet of clothes which was to follow, and a proper proportion of kissing and hand-shaking, the young ladies set off on their walk back to Brompton.

"Are you quite sure you are not tired, Patty?" inquired Matilda, as soon as they got into Regent-street.

"Not a bit," replied Patty, sturdily.

"Then let us cross Piccadilly, and walk down St. James's-street," said her friend. "I never come to this part of the town, if I can help it, without just taking a peep at that dear St. James's Park. I really think it is the most beautiful place upon earth."

The well-assorted friends had proceeded about halfway down St. James's-street, when their four eyes were pleasantly struck by the appearance of two young guardsmen in full regimentals, who issued from the coffee-house at the bottom of the street, and walked up the pavement towards them. A silent pressure of the arm, given and returned between the two ladies, did all, and perhaps more than all that was necessary for directing each other's attention to the interesting spectacle; and they walked on together with a step, perhaps rather more dignified and measured than usual, but with great decorum, and without exchanging a word.

Both the young men were tall and handsome, and neither of the young ladies refused them the passing tribute of a stare. But what was the astonishment of the well-behaved Miss Matilda Perkins, when she felt the arm of her young friend suddenly withdrawn, and saw her stand with outstretched hands and starting eyes on the middle of the pavement, gazing on the features of one of the gentlemen, as if turned to stone by some male gorgon. The young guardsman, however, who was in earnest conversation with his companion, did not notice her, and pursuing their course, they presently turned together into a shop.

The petrified Patty then appeared in some degree to recover herself, and grasping convulsively the arm of her friend, heaved a sort of gasping sigh, and distinctly uttered the monosyllable "JACK!"

## CHAPTER XXI.

"GRACIOUS heaven! you don't say so," cried the sympathising Matilda, entering at once into the nature of her friend's feelings. "This is a most wonderful discovery, indeed! But you must compose yourself, my dear girl, you must, really. Lean on me, Patty, and walk gently on. When we pass the shop, you know, you may just look in; and if you can catch his face, you will be able to satisfy yourself whether you may not have made some mistake."

"Mistake!" shouted Patty. "Do you think I don't know him? Do you think, after all I have told you, that I should not know my darling Jack amongst a million?"

"But I am quite sure, Patty, that the gentleman did not know you."

"Stuff and nonsense! How should he know me, when he was chattering as fast as he could speak to that other fellow, and never turned his eyes my way? But you don't suppose I mean to part so? I shall go in after him, I promise you—and then you shall see whether he knows me or not."

"For heaven's sake, Patty, don't follow two gentlemen in that way," said Matilda, really frightened. "It is a saddler's shop, my dear girl, and nothing but men ever do go into it. We shall be taken for something very, *very* bad, indeed we shall."

But Patty, without paying the slightest attention to her remonstrance, continued to drag her on, and on reaching the shop-door, without uttering another syllable of warning, she fairly pulled her in, marching straight forward to the back of the shop, where stood *the chase*, in earnest examination of a set of harness.

Patty's object was at that moment not so much to speak to him as to make him see her, and this she at length effected, by dauntlessly walking round his very elegant-looking companion, and finally stationing herself within about half a foot of his person.

Startled at this sudden vicinity of female drapery, the young man looked up, and his countenance most unequivocally acknowledged acquaintance with the remarkable figure that stood before him. Hot and agitated, her showy bonnet pushed backwards till it was almost off her head, her colour crimson, and her eyes extended with no mitigated stare, poor Patty really looked very far from respectable; while her terrified companion, whose more decent appearance and sober demeanour might have been some protection, retreated towards the door, utterly incapable

of braving a scene which she thought likely to prove so exceedingly disagreeable. Neither her absence, nor presence, however, were capable of producing any great effect on the catastrophe. Patty's acquaintance no sooner set his eyes upon her, than, with a complexion as glowing as her own, he suddenly dropped the article he had been examining, and, abruptly seizing her hand, led her through the shop, and into the street, without speaking a word.

With an agitated and hurried step he urged her forward some paces past the door, and then pausing, and changing the grasp he held of her hand for the usual salutation of a friendly greeting, he said, "My dear Miss O'Donagough, I sincerely hope I see you well—and truly glad should I have been to have shaken hands with you under other circumstances; but your referring to our acquaintance on board ship, before the friend with whom you saw me, or indeed before any friend I have, would be very mischievous to me; and I remember your former kindness too well, not to feel certain that you would be sincerely grieved to do me the injury which would inevitably ensue were you to betray me."

"Betray you, Jack!" replied Patty, very innocently. "Good gracious, no! I would not do you any harm for the whole world; but you need not be afraid of speaking to me when we are by ourselves, you know. Tell me when you will come and see me, my dear, dear Jack!" and she grasped the hand which held hers with unscrupulous affection, causing thereby a degree of remorse and embarrassment to the young man, of which, assuredly, she had no idea, and which, if expressed to her would have been a mystery past finding out.

Distressed beyond measure, and moreover very firmly held, "Jack" felt himself terribly at a loss to know what he had best do or say next—a puzzle which was rather increased than diminished, when, on casting his eyes towards the door of the shop he had left, he beheld his friend stationed there, and looking towards him, evidently prevented from following him by a species of discretion most terribly injurious to the poor, unsuspicious girl, whose natural joy at meeting him again had thus undeservedly betrayed her into a situation calculated to excite the most disgraceful suspicions.

"Jack" was, or rather, perhaps, had been, a very harem-scarem sort of youth, but by no means framed to endure with composure the idea of producing serious mischief to a young girl, innocent of everything save a good-natured and friendly recognition of himself.

After the struggle and meditation of a moment, he said, "I will come and see you, my dear Miss Patty. Tell me where you are, and I will call upon you."

Patty immediately drew forth her little pocket-book, and tearing out a leaf on which she had written her friend Matilda's address, before they parted at Brighton, presented it to him.

"I am not with papa and mamma now, but visiting a friend," said she, as she put it into his hands.

Greatly relieved by this intelligence, and choosing what appeared to him a lesser evil, in order to avoid a greater, he once more permitted her to see the smile which had so awakened her young susceptibilities, and said,

"That being the case, dear Patty, I shall come and see you with the greatest pleasure; but you must promise not to mention having met me either to father or mother. I grieve for the necessity which obliges me to impose such uncivil conditions, but I cannot help thinking that, when I assure you this mystery is essential to my interest, you will not refuse to comply with them."

Nothing could be farther from the delighted Patty's thoughts than making any difficulty about the matter; and perhaps at the bottom of her heart she was rather glad than otherwise that she was to be his only confidant.

"I won't say a single word or syllable to either of them," she answered with great eagerness. "It was always you and me that was the great friends, you know, Jack, and so we shall be still—shan't we? But tell me what your real name is before you go. It is not Jack, now, I'll bet—it is something that begins with an S, mamma says, because she saw it on the silver fork."

The young man coloured, and laughed. "You must call me Mr. Steady now, Patty. Good bye—I shall be sure to call on you to-morrow at two o'clock exactly. Good bye!" And again shaking her hand, he withdrew, making her, as he departed, a very respectful bow, for the benefit of his friend, to whom he pledged his word and honour, on rejoining him, that the young lady he had been talking to was perfectly respectable, and in fact hardly more than a child, whatever he might think to the contrary.

Patty's first action upon his leaving her, was to clap her hands, which might be interpreted either as a symptom of violent and irrepressible joy, or as a signal to her friend, who was by this time at a considerable distance in advance of her. Miss Matilda Perkins was indeed in a state of very great agitation; and a little forgetful, perhaps, of the duties which her superior age imposed, and which might be thought to include the necessity of not leaving her dear young friend alone under such circumstances, she had pushed onward with all her might, and had by this time nearly reached the top of St. James's-

street, relaxing her speed, however, a little before she turned into the vortex of Piccadilly, in which she suddenly remembered that the highly-connected Miss O'Donagough might possibly look for her in vain. She had not, in truth, the courage to turn her head; being persuaded that if she did, she might be involved as a party in an adventure of which, having "dwelt in decencies" for nearly six-and-thirty years, she was very heartily ashamed.

Patty, perceiving that there was some danger of her being left alone in the street, shouted the name of "Matilda!" with all the strength of her lungs, and then set off at full gallop, equally regardless of the elbows or the eyes she encountered.

"What *do* you run away for at such a rate, Matilda?" cried the panting girl, overtaking her, and once more seizing upon her arm. "What a fool you must be, to be sure! Why, what in the name of wonder did you think was going to happen to you?"

"Oh! nothing, my dear," replied Miss Matilda, recovering herself on perceiving that the young lady was alone. "Of course, you know, I could not think there was anything going to happen to me. Whatever notice I get from gentlemen, my dear Patty, is in a very different way from being spoken to by strangers in the streets. Good heaven! what would poor, dear Foxcroft say if he should hear of my being seen following officers into a saddler's shop, in St. James's-street."

"I would not have believed, if I hadn't seen it, that you could be such an excessive idiot, Matilda!" replied Patty, with some little warmth. "Do you call Jack a stranger? As for that matter, I am sure you are much more a stranger to me than he is. Dear, darling, delightful, lovely Jack! How I do adore him! And he shall find, too, that I am as true-hearted and faithful a girl as ever was. Why didn't you look at him, you great goose? You never in all your born days beheld anything one half so handsome."

"Well, my dearest Patty, now my fright is over, I wish you joy at meeting him with all my heart," said her companion, who recollected how exceedingly important to all her own dearest hopes, was the continued affection of her youthful friend. "You must not be angry with me, darling, for being a little frightened at first. You don't know how particular London people are! I do assure you, that if anybody had seen us going into that shop after those gentlemen, it would have been thought perfectly improper and unladylike. And besides, my dear girl, I do believe that when a woman's heart is so completely devoted as mine, it makes them always most scrupulously particular in everything they do about other men. I really should have felt that I was acting ungenerously by Foxcroft if I had not come away."

"All that may be very fine, and very right and proper for you. I really don't know anything about middle-aged people like you and Captain Foxcroft. But if you fancy I shall ever meet my own darling Jack without speaking to him, you are quite entirely mistaken. I don't care a straw whether it is a saddler's shop, or a devil's shop. Jack is Jack to me, all the world over."

"Of course, my dear, he is an acquaintance of yours, and that makes all the difference; and I hope, my dearest girl, that he told you his name."

"To be sure he did, dear fellow! His name is Steady; and he is to come and call upon me at your house exactly at two o'clock to-morrow."

"Is he indeed? then we must just tell my sister Louisa, if you please Patty, that Mr. Steady is a friend of your papa's, and don't mention anything about St. James's-street."

"I don't care half a farthing what you tell her, Matilda. You may say that he is one of my mother's fine cousins, if you will. Now that I have found him again, I don't care for any earthly thing beside," replied Patty. "But, by-the-by," she added, drawing closer to her companion, and speaking with an air of mystery, "there is a secret about him that he won't tell to anybody but me. Dear darling! I'll keep his secret, you see if I don't."

"Of course you will, Patty, if he confides it to you. And I must say, that the glance I had of him showed plainly enough that he was somebody. But if he tells you the secret about his disguise on board ship, and all that, there is no doubt but he will tell it to your mamma and your papa too," rejoined Miss Matilda.

"No, but he won't though!" cried Patty, exultingly. "He told me, dear fellow! that he had very particular reasons indeed for not letting them know anything about it, and you don't think I am going to be such a monster as to betray him? That's just what he said himself, dear creature, 'You won't betray me, Patty,' said he; and I'll see father, mother, uncles, aunts, and cousins too, every one of them in the Red Sea before I'd hurt a hair of his beautiful head. I can't help your knowing it, Matilda, because I had told you everything before, and that I must make him understand; unless, indeed, you could be clever enough and kind enough to take yourself off, and your wise sister too, just before two o'clock to-morrow. I had rather five hundred times see him alone, and then he'll tell me lots more about himself, I'll be bound. Do you think you could get her out, and keep away for an hour or two, Matilda?"

This proposal very considerably embarrassed the fair individual to whom it was addressed. To disoblige Miss O'Dona-

gough, or in any way to check the intimacy from which she hoped to derive advantages so very essential to her own happiness, was not to be thought of. Yet there was something that rather frightened her in the notion of leaving her friend Patty so entirely to her own discretion as she now proposed; and without answering very explicitly, she only pressed the arm that rested on hers with the caressing fondness so usual between them, and muttered something about its ever being, she was sure, her greatest delight to please her dear Patty in all things.

"That won't do, Matilda," cried Patty, suddenly standing stock-still, and very nearly overturning a butcher's tray, intended to swing innoxiously round her as she passed. "That sort of answer is not worth a pin. I really have a monstrous deal that I want to say to my own dear Jack Steady, and there is more still that I want to have him say to me, and I feel most positively sure that he will be quite glum if there is anybody by but me to hear him. I'm sure, Matilda, I shall always be ready to do as I'd be done by, and I promise faithfully, upon my word and honour, that if you will but go out to-morrow at two o'clock, and take your sister Louisa along with you, I will contrive to let you have a *tête-à-tête* in our drawing-room with Foxcroft, for just as long as you like, as soon as ever papa has got his nice new house, you know. For papa says he is quite sure that Foxcroft will contrive to get leave of absence on account of his health, or for some excuse or other. He is quite sure of it. So you see, Matilda, that if you will do what I tell you, there is no need that I should be long in your debt."

The argument thus urged went straight to the heart of Miss Matilda. "Well, my dear," she replied, "I will see what I can do—but Louisa, of course, is her own mistress, and if she does not choose to take a walk just at that time, you know I can't make her."

"But I know that you can," replied Patty, sharply; "as if I had not seen you come over her hundreds and hundreds of times! And when she has set off with saying, 'I don't think I *can* do *that*, Matilda,' haven't I heard her end at last by, 'Well, to be sure, I dare say you know what is best, my dear!'"

This being said in Patty's best style of mimicry, it produced the accustomed meed of admiration from her friend, testified as usual by an assurance that she never did, no, never in her life, hear such a mimic! But ere this oft-recurring expression was well spoken, Patty suddenly stood still, and having a tight hold of Miss Matilda's arm, caused her to stand still also.

"What is the matter, my dear?" demanded the elder lady.

"Matter!" ejaculated the younger one. "I certainly shall go distracted, that's all—I certainly shall, Matilda, if you don't

turn back this very instant, and scud along with me to my own bedroom as fast as your legs can carry you."

"What for, my dear? Shan't we be *very* tired, Patty?" demanded Matilda, in a languid voice.

"Tired! What signifies being tired, I should like to know, compared to my not having one single bit of any ribbon for my neck, or my waist, or my wrists, but that ugly dark blue that papa bought at Brighton? They make such a fuss, both of 'em, about my not spending too much money in ribbons, that I am obliged to be as stingy as a miser over my best, and that's the reason I left all my pink pinned up safe in silver paper in my drawer. I know it couldn't make any great difference with you and your sister whether my skin looked better or worse;—but Jack! I vow and declare I would not let Jack come and see me in those nasty, hideous, narrow blue bows, if you'd give me a thousand pounds!"

"I do assure you, Patty," replied her friend, "that you *can't* look more beautiful in anything than you do in those identical blue ribbons. I have said so to Louisa scores of times."

"Come along, my dear!" was the only reply which the steadfast-minded Miss O'Donagough made to this friendly assurance, and being considerably the stronger of the two, her will proved irresistible, and the two young ladies once more jostled their way along the ever-busy pavement of Piccadilly, and in process of time again reached the O'Donagough lodgings in —— street.

The ample face of Mrs. O'Donagough was perceptible above the blind of the parlour window considerably before Patty's impatient knocking had concluded, and she burst forth upon them into the passage with all the eagerness of maternal anxiety, just as her daughter raised one foot to mount the stairs.

"What in the world is all this for?" demanded Mrs. O'Donagough, laying her hand on the shoulder of Miss Matilda; for by an active movement forward, Patty had escaped her. "What *are* you come back for?"

"Something that Patty wanted out of her drawers," replied the discreet and faithful confidant.

"Good gracious! what a shame to drag you back all this way! why you might have got home over and over by this time," said Mrs. O'Donagough.

"Oh, dear! the distance is no consequence," replied Matilda; "and you know there is nothing in the world I would not do to please Patty!"

While this passed, the two ladies continued standing at the bottom of the stairs, for Mrs. O'Donagough did not feel altogether sure that her husband, who was in the act of dining upon beefsteaks and onions in the parlour, would be particularly

well pleased by a visit from the refined Miss Matilda Perkins—especially as that young lady had been informed that they were to dine at Richmond at seven o'clock. But Patty's business above stairs, proceeded so slowly, that her vexed mother could no longer avoid asking the weary Matilda to sit down.

"You won't mind finding Donny at luncheon, will you?" she said, as she at length threw open the parlour-door. "That silly Patty forgot something or other, and she has brought Matilda Perkins all the way back from Brompton to fetch it," said Mrs. O'Donagough to her husband, as she entered "but you won't mind her seeing you eat your luncheon, you know, though it is five o'clock."

"You will be shocked by the sight of so substantial a morning meal, my dear Miss Matilda," said the master of the apartment; "but the fact is, Lord Robert has kept me so late at the club, consulting about some private business, which has brought him up to town—and you may guess how delighted he was to see an old friend, at a time when the chances are five hundred to one against his finding a single creature in London—he has kept me so devilish late, that I was absolutely obliged to send out for something solid before we set off for Richmond."

"What on earth can Patty be about?" exclaimed the hungry Mrs. O'Donagough, impatiently. "There never was such a plague of a girl about her things! What *is* it, Matilda, that she is come back for?"

"I don't quite exactly know," replied Matilda, blushing and faltering. "She said she had forgotten something, and wished to come back, and I did not say much about it."

"Do let the girl alone, my dear," said Mr. O'Donagough. "If our charming friend here likes to indulge her little whims, I don't see why you should grumble about it."

"How you do spoil that girl!" retorted his lady, resuming with a bounce her place at the table, and suddenly deciding that she would not be such a fool as to let her beefsteaks get cold for any one. "I do believe, that let her do what she would you would find out some reason or other to prove that she was right."

"She is right now, at any rate," replied the father, looking up as the young lady entered the room, "for I never saw her look better in my life."

"What *did* you come home for, Patty?" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, suspending her well-charged fork within half an inch of her mouth.

"I wanted a pocket-handkerchief, mamma," replied the young lady.

"As if Matilda could not have lent you one; I am sure there was something else, so you may as well out with it.

What's that you have got in your other hand? Didn't I tell you that I would get the girl of the house to carry your things for you, and what is the use, then, of dragging through the streets with them yourself?"

"Use or not use, mamma, I shall carry this parcel, because I like to do it; and that, I suppose, is reason enough, isn't it?"

"What's *in* the parcel, Patty?" persisted her mother, pettishly. "You haven't got hold of my lace collar, I hope?"

"You take me for a thief, do you? Well, that's civil any how, isn't it, Matilda?" said Patty, with rather an embarrassed laugh. "But come along, or we shall keep Miss Louisa waiting for her dinner," she added, endeavouring to back out of the room without further parley.

"Come and give me a kiss, Patty?" said her father, seized with an unlucky fit of affection.

Till now the young lady had contrived to keep her parcel, if not quite out of sight, at least out of the reach of her mother, by holding it pertinaciously behind her back; but this unwelcome invitation, rendered the manœuvre of none effect, for as she stooped forward to receive the paternal caress, her mamma snatched at the parcel, obtained it, tore it mercilessly open, and disclosed sundry ells of bright rose-coloured ribbon, a portion of which was daintily tied up in various sized knots, while the rest floated left and right, far and wide, in unrestrained profusion.

"What in the world is all this for?" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, with marked displeasure on her countenance. "Don't you know, Patty, all that has been said about these sort of things? What good is it to talk to you like a reasonable grown-up woman, while you still act like a child? Did not your father pay four and ninepence for these very ribbons, expressly on condition that they should be kept up as best, and worn for nothing but showing off when we wanted you to look as well as possible? Can you stand there, and tell me that you don't remember this?"

"I am not going to tell you any such thing, Mrs. O'Donagough," replied Patty, in her most rebellious accent, and at the same time glancing at her father for support, for whose especial amusement, she had formed her phrase; but it did not answer, for he was growing more hungry and angry every moment, and turning towards her with unexpected firmness, exclaimed,

"Don't answer your mother like a fool, Miss Patty! What the devil do you want all that finery for?"

"Want it, papa? Lor-a-mercy, doesn't every girl always want all the finery she can get? I am sure if she doesn't she's a fool. Come along, Matilda—" was the not unskilful answer of the beauty, while replacing her ribbons in their paper envelope; but she was disappointed if she fancied that it would

satisfy her mamma, for Mrs. O'Donagough, turning briskly round to the blushing Matilda, abruptly demanded if they were going to have any company, adding,

"But even if you were, that is no reason why she should gallop back, and ransack the drawers in this way—for these pink ribbons were bought to smarten up a morning-dress, just to call on Mrs. Stephenson, you know, or anything of that sort."

Notwithstanding her advantages in point of age, it was evident that Miss Matilda Perkins could not compete with her young friend, either in courage or in presence of mind; for she hesitated, and looked exceedingly embarrassed as she replied,

"I am not quite sure, Mrs. O'Donagough, about who we are likely to have call upon us of a morning, but dear Patty always likes to be a little smart, you know, before strangers."

"And she'd be the first to scold, if I didn't," subjoined Patty.

Then hastily kissing her father's forehead, as he threw back his head in the act of lifting a porter-pot to his mouth, and nodding "Good bye, mamma," to her mother, she bolted out of the room and the house, without running the risk of any further conversation, and was followed by her friend, whose usual obsequious civility to Mrs. O'Donagough, was altogether conquered by her dread of being entrapped into the betrayal of Patty's secret.

But though the fair friends succeeded in getting out of the house, and in making their way safely to Bellevue-terrace, Brompton, they had not by any means "thoroughly bamboozled" Mrs. O'Donagough, as Patty boldly assured her confidant was the case; for no sooner had the angry lady refreshed herself by a draught of her favourite beverage, than she thus addressed her spouse:

"Don't you see, Donny, as plain as that two and two make four, that these two girls have got some trick in their heads? I'll bet what you please, that if you and I make them a call to-morrow morning, at a genteel visiting hour, we shall find some *beau* or other there; that Miss Patty is particularly desirous to captivate some of the young lads of the ——, perhaps that they used to meet so constantly on the pier at Brighton—not that I should care a straw for that, if it wasn't that they were both so mighty shy about talking of it. That looks like mischief, don't it?"

"It is early days, too, to catch Patty out in such a trick as that," replied Mr. O'Donagough. "However, I have no objection to look after her to-morrow morning. But mind, whatever happens, you must leave the whole management of the business to me. Don't let's have any jawing before strangers, for God's sake!"

"That's all fair, my dear; I shan't want to meddle or make, I promise you. But it will do Patty a monstrous deal of good to discover, that with all her cleverness, there are eyes as sharp as her own, though may be not quite so bright.

## CHAPTER XXII.

MEANWHILE the two friends at last reached their destination at Brompton; but not before the veal cutlets and mashed potatoes were very nearly reduced to cinders, and poor Miss Louisa as nearly out of temper as her constitutional tranquillity would permit.

The evening, of course, passed in alternate mutterings between Miss Matilda and Patty, which, in style, might not inaptly have been compared to those classic eclogues, in which a gentle contest is briskly kept up on rival themes; for "dear, beautiful Jack Steady," on the one side; and "poor, dear Foxcroft," on the other, invariably formed the subject of each eloquent speaker's volubility. Good Miss Louisa was very little in their way, not seeming in the slightest degree conscious of what they were saying, and to all appearance as completely devoted to the intricate mysteries of some newly-invented knitting, as her companions could be in endeavouring to trace the still subtiler twistings of the human heart.

The following morning looked so brightly inviting, that even the quiet, thimble-loving Miss Louisa, proposed a walk; adding, moreover, with more than usual vivacity, "Suppose, my dears, that we were all to go together to hear the band play? It is such a beautiful walk, turning in at the Green-park, Matilda, you know; and I don't suppose dear Patty ever heard such a band in her life."

The friends exchanged glances and a little closing up of the eyes, and an almost imperceptible shake of the head in each, said plainly to the other that it would not do at all. It had, indeed, been agreed between them before they left their sleeping apartment (for the uncombative Louisa had resigned herself to the drawing-room carpet, and a blanket) that Patty must assign an incipient sore throat, as a reason for wishing to stay at home; while Matilda, after the one o'clock slice of bread and butter had been handed round, should request the company of her elder sister upon some errand of importance, to be invented for the nonce, the eligibility of performing which should be further made manifest by pointing out the necessity of not letting poor Patty talk too much.

All this was accordingly performed ably, and received in the

best manner possible by Miss Louisa; and at ten minutes before two, Miss O'Donagough was seated alone, and in state, upon the Miss Perkinses' sofa, with every one of her beautiful pink bows exactly in its right place; her black curls, *à la poodle*, wantoning over her comely face, and her eyes shining with more than usual brightness.

Luckily she did not wait long, or it is possible her charming looks might have been injured by impatience. Exactly at two o'clock, the knocker of the house-door gave signal of a visitor; an active young step was heard upon the stairs, and in the next moment, the name of "Mr. John Steady" was announced, when Patty's "own darling Jack" stood before her.

The young man, though no longer in regimentals, looked, as she thought, ten thousand times handsomer than ever, and Patty's step to welcome him, was so eager that it brought her to the door, almost before he had fully entered it.

"Oh, my dear Jack!" she exclaimed; "I am so glad you are come! and I have made everybody go out on purpose that we might have a long, comfortable talk by ourselves. What a time it is since you set off in that nasty boat for Sheerness! Ain't you glad to see me again, Jack?"

"Most surely I am, my dear Miss Patty," replied the young man; "but you are looking so remarkably well, that I have no occasion to inquire after your health. Have you been in London ever since your arrival?"

"Oh lor, no! not we," replied Patty, seating herself on the sofa, with a hand extended on each side of her, so as to assist in a sort of jump-for-joy movement with which she relieved the fulness of her heart, while she gazed upon her visitor, as he sat opposite to her. "We staid almost no time in London then, but went down on the top of the coach to Brighton on purpose to see all mamma's grand relations; and there they were, lots of 'em, men, women, and children; but there wasn't one of the whole kit that I liked so well as you, Jack."

"You are exceedingly kind, I am sure," replied the youth, blushing a little, and then stopping, very evidently at a loss what to say next.

"Mercy upon me! I don't call that kind, because I could not help it, you know. You could not like anybody as well as me, Jack, could you?"

"I am sure nobody in the world can deserve to be liked better, because you are always so very good-natured."

"Good-natured! Is that all? Why, I wouldn't give a penny for anybody who hadn't more to say for themselves than that. My goodness, Jack! Do you remember your jumping overboard into the sea? I never shall forget it the longest day I have to live. And do you remember who it was that brought

you to? And then our nice, dear ship-billiards! Oh, what fun, to be sure! And think of your trying to make us believe that you wasn't a bit better than a common sailor! But I wasn't such a fool as that, anyhow."

"My dear Miss O'Donagough," began Mr. Steady—but the young lady stopped him short—

"Once for all, Jack, I won't be called Miss O'Donagough, or Miss Patty either, by you. So mind that, if you please, or else you and I shall quarrel, as sure as you sit there. You always used to call me Patty, and Patty I choose to be called; and I shall call you Jack, too, unless when we happen to have listeners, and then, I suppose, I must call you Mr. Steady."

The young man seemed to make an effort to look grave, but it was in vain, and he laughed heartily. Without exactly understanding, perhaps, the cause of his mirth, his companion shared it, and laughed heartily too, till, suddenly jumping up, the young lady seized a pair of scissors that lay on the table, and with a hop, skip, and jump, got to the back of Mr. Steady's chair, and, stationing herself behind it, said in a voice of authority,

"Eyes front! Mind the word of command, Mr. Jack, or I'll cut your head off—I will, upon my honour."

"What are you going to do, my dear girl?" said the young man, disobeying her commands, and turning himself round to look in her face.

"Do what I bid you," said Patty, "and no harm shall come of it. See here—don't look so frightened!—a fair exchange is no robbery."

And so saying, the lively young lady mercilessly inclosed within "the glittering forceps" one of her own ringlets, which she scrupled not to

——— dissever
From her fair head for ever and for ever.

"There now, Jack—look at that," said she; "isn't it a pretty little curl?" And dropping it rather upon than into his hand, she seized the moment in which, of necessity, his attention was directed to it, and performed the same feat upon a portion of the young man's chestnut tresses, leaving a very cruel gap just over his left ear.

"Now! what d'ye say to that, master Jack? I am the same funny girl that ever I was, ain't I?" said Patty, skipping round in front of him, and exhibiting her prize exultingly held on high.

"Oh, Patty, this is very foolish! What would your mamma say if she could know it?" said the young man, rising, and

looking very much as if he were disposed to re-exchange the tokens by dint either of stratagem or force. "Come, be a good girl, and throw it away. A fine, tall young lady as you are now, must not play the same sort of tricks that you used to do when a child."

"Throw it away! And will you throw mine away, Jack? What a brute you must be to think of it!" And Patty very coaxingly approached him, holding fast the treasured lock in one hand, while with the other she cleverly caused the one he still held to curl round two of his fingers. "Now, is it not very pretty, Jack?" said she, looking up in his face with a sort of deprecating smile.

"Yes, to be sure it is; and you are very pretty, too, Patty," said the youth, fairly beat out of his discretion, and unceremoniously saluting the blooming cheek which had placed itself so near him.

At the very moment he did so, and while the not too greatly incensed Patty was laughing heartily at his audacity, the door opened, and in walked Mr. and Mrs. Allen O'Donagough.

The parties naturally fell into a *tableau*, and for half a minute not a word was spoken; but Patty soon recovered both her courage and her tongue, and though still blushing a rather deeper tint, perhaps, than the celestial rosy red of which the poet sings, she managed to assume an air of very tolerable *nonchalance* as she exclaimed,

"So, you are come to look after me, I suppose! but if you look sharp, perhaps you will see, into the bargain, an old friend with a new face."

Mrs. O'Donagough's first emotion was of a mixed nature, being compounded of one feeling a little approaching to alarm, and another rather nearer still to satisfaction, at discovering her Patty so evidently, according to her notions, the object of a tender passion, and that, too, from a person so pre-eminently elegant in appearance as Mr. John Steady. But the words of the young lady caused her to examine the countenance of the gentleman more attentively, and, ere she had gazed long, her whole attitude and manner changed; a smile of unmixed satisfaction distended her countenance, she laid her hand upon the arm of her husband, and, drawing him a step or two forward, stopped within a yard of her old acquaintance, exclaiming in a sort of theatrical whisper, intended to be heard with particular distinctness,

"Look there, O'Donagough! Look there, and tell me what you see."

Mr. O'Donagough's demeanour upon seeing his daughter at a *tête-à-tête* game of romps with a strange man, was by no

means so equivocal as that of his lady; for he grew extremely red in the face, and altogether appeared well-inclined to be in a great rage; but the accents of his Barnaby acted like oil on troubled water, his frown relaxed, his colour and his choler became mitigated, and yielding to her gentle influence, he set about staring the stranger very fixedly in the face.

"Mercy on me! It can't be, can it? It is not possible, to be sure!" were the sentences he uttered rapidly, but with every appearance of satisfaction, in place of his late displeasure. As soon as the last words were spoken, Patty, who watched him narrowly, placed herself in an attitude similar to that of her mother, upon his other arm, and taking upon herself to answer his wondering inquiries, said,

"Yes, but it is possible, papa; and what is more, it is true. It is our own dear Jack, and no other, you may take my word for it."

"And pray, Miss Patty, how did you find him out?" demanded her father, turning his eyes abruptly from the face of his old acquaintance to that of his daughter, with a look which, though no longer so fierce as before, seemed to express some curiosity, to say the least of it, for a satisfactory explanation. But the forbidden discovery being made, and that without any agency of hers, Miss Patty's difficulties were quite at an end, and without affecting any further mystery, she replied,

"How did I find him out? Why, in the street to be sure; and never was there such a piece of luck! Wasn't it lucky, Jack? Wasn't you delighted to see me?"

It may be remembered that Mrs. O'Donagough herself had never formed any great intimacy with the young shipmate who now stood before her in a guise so wholly different from any in which she had hitherto seen him, yet so precisely accordant to the imaginings which her shrewd suspicions had suggested; her feelings, therefore, upon this unexpected rencounter, were simply those of triumphant sagacity: and it was with a chuckling merriment, very little agreeable to the object of it, that she continued to gaze upon him from top to toe. Mr. O'Donagough was perhaps even better pleased still; for not only had the discovery removed some exceedingly disagreeable suspicions from his mind, in which his fair daughter was concerned, but, with the keenness of a *professional* eye, he discerned at a glance, that whatever might have been the cause of the masquerading carried on amongst the crew and passengers of the Atalanta, the young man was decidedly of that class of society among which he particularly desired to increase his acquaintance, and this unexpected accident seemed to offer a very excellent opportunity for doing so. Thus the only person in the group who felt not perfectly and pleasantly at ease, was poor Jack him-

self, and he would gladly have given a joint of his little finger to escape answering Patty's affectionate query, and two, perhaps, might the sacrifice have placed him clear of the adventure altogether.

"Wasn't it lucky, Jack?" reiterated Patty, "and ain't we famously caught out with our locks of hair exchanged?" And the young lady held up to view the shining trophy she had won, while her eyes directed those of her observant papa and mamma to the now considerably-deranged curl which the unfortunate youth still held between his fingers. Luckily for him the necessity of immediately replying to Patty's tough query was obviated by Mr. O'Donagough's saying, as if in consequence of the intelligence conveyed by the tell-tale locks of hair,

"You will not be surprised, sir, if I now think it right to request you will inform me what your real name may be?"

"Jack is perfectly dumfoundered, poor, dear fellow!" exclaimed Patty, laughing; "but I can tell you his name, papa, without plaguing him to speak, if he had rather let it alone. His name is Steady, Mr. John Steady, and that answers to the fork, don't it, mamma?"

"Mr. O'Donagough!" said the young man, appearing suddenly to rouse himself with the energy of a newly-formed resolution, "will you give me leave to speak with you alone for five minutes?"

"Gracious goodness! Can it be about marrying her?" thought Mrs. O'Donagough.

"He is going to pop the question as sure as my name's Patty!" inwardly murmured her daughter, unconsciously clapping her hands in the ecstasy of her heart. Mr. O'Donagough himself, however, felt convinced in a moment, from the tone of voice in which the request was made, that the object of it was not his daughter; yet, nevertheless, he had enough of interest and curiosity in the business to answer readily,

"I shall be very happy to hear, sir, whatever you may be pleased to communicate to me;" which assurance was given in Mr. O'Donagough's most respectful and gentlemanlike manner.

"May I attend you to another room, sir?" said the young man.

"Is there any room here, Patty, into which I can show this gentleman?" inquired her father.

"No, that there isn't papa, except the Perkinses' bedroom, and that's all in a litter, I'll be bound."

"Then we will take a turn in the park, Mr. O'Donagough, if not disagreeable to you," said the young man, taking up his hat, and deliberately laying down poor Patty's ringlet in its place.

Mr. O'Donagough replied only by a bow, and they left the room together.

As the subject matter of the conversation between Patty and her mother may be easily guessed, it is unnecessary to repeat it, and we will therefore follow the two gentlemen into Hyde Park, where, as by mutual consent, they chose a path the least liable to interruption, when the following conversation took place:—

"It can hardly be necessary for me to inform you, Mr. O'Donagough," began the young man, "that folly and frolic must be pleaded in excuse for my having made your acquaintance under false colours."

"I am very glad to hear, my dear sir, that there was no worse cause for it," said the elder gentleman.

"Sir?"—in very haughty accents, was the rejoinder of the younger one.

"I feared it possible," resumed Mr. O'Donagough, in his best manner, "that some unfortunate affair of honour might have rendered a distant expedition necessary, or at least prudent."

"No, sir. Thank heaven I have nothing so irreparable on my conscience. The history is briefly this:—I was left without father, mother, or any near relative, except a sister still younger than myself, with a large fortune, and a personal guardian, for whom I had conceived a very unjust, but very strong dislike. For a few years I pursued my studies at Eton, with tolerable propriety I believe; but at the end of that time, my guardian wished me to go to college, while I insisted upon immediately entering the Guards, which produced a quarrel, all the faultiness, and all the violence of which belonged wholly to myself. I am sorry to confess, that it was in the mere wantonness of intentionally giving this excellent friend as much pain and anxiety as I could well devise, that I set off for Australia without communicating to him the slightest intimation of my intending to leave England at all; and aware that if I went under my own name, he would be likely to get the intelligence from the newspapers, I had the folly to go out in one ship in the character of a mechanic about to seek my fortune in a new world, and return in another, under the semblance, as you know, of a common sailor belonging to the crew. In the latter case, however, I confided a portion of the truth to the captain and crew—partly because I felt it would be impossible to keep up my assumed character with them, on account of my nautical ignorance, and partly, I own, for the sake of arranging the minor particulars of my passage on a more agreeable footing than I had thought it necessary to do in going out. My name, however, it was not necessary to disclose, and I believe I left the ship at Sheerness, without anything more being known of

me than that I was a lad with a good deal of money, and a roving sort of disposition, which had led me to take a trip that I did not wish to have known. And this, in fact, was the exact truth. I had one confidant, and one only, to this thoughtless frolic; my sister knew where I was gone, and from her I received one letter, directed to me according to my instructions, under a feigned name, to the care of a merchant at Sydney. This letter produced a total revolution in all my feelings respecting my guardian. It described his sufferings on my account, as so much more blended with affection than I had ever believed possible, that my heart was softened, and my spirit sobered at once. But it had never occurred to him that I could have committed any greater folly than the merely keeping myself concealed near London; and as my sister, faithful to the promise I had extorted from her, never betrayed her knowledge of my having quitted England, his regret and his sufferings were wholly occasioned by the idea that he had wounded a too sensitive temper by the assumption of more severe authority than he ought to have shown. 'Come back instantly,' wrote my sister, 'and never let him know the whole extent of your folly.' It was from a wish to follow strictly this advice, that I so cautiously concealed my name and station; and as he has never since my return asked me a single question respecting my absence, I have never yet recurred to the subject. We are, I am happy to say, on the best possible terms; and though I have been for some months of age, I would have been perfectly willing to atone for past rebellion, by entering myself at Oxford. But of this he would not hear; and convinced, as he kindly says, that my former opposition proceeded from a genuine and decided preference for the profession I was so eager to enter, he himself arranged everything respecting my commission; and I am now, with much better luck than I deserve, in precisely the position I desired, without the mortification of having my boyish escapade bruited from one end of the country to the other. You will perceive, therefore, Mr. O'Donagough, that I have very strong reasons for not wishing to have our meeting on board the Atalanta made known; and I shall hold myself greatly indebted to your courtesy, if you will never, under any circumstances, allude to it, and shall be grateful, also, if you will use your influence with the ladies of your family to the same effect."

"Depend upon it, my young friend," replied Mr. O'Donagough, in an accent of much kindness, "depend upon it, your secret is perfectly safe with me; nor do I fear the discretion of either my wife or daughter. Patty is as good a girl as ever lived, and with all her high spirits, is as gentle and obedient as a lamb to every wish that either her mother or I seriously express to her—and for *you*, dear Jack!—But this familiar appel-

lation must be used no longer. May I ask, sir, if your name be really Steady?"

"No, sir, it is not," replied the young man, colouring.

Mr. O'Donagough said no more, and the silence which ensued was rather awkward. It was the young incognito who broke it, by saying, with a good-humoured smile,

"I tax your kindness severely perhaps, Mr. O'Donagough, both by my confidence, and by my want of it. I am, I believe, absurdly anxious about this concealment, but the fact is, some of the friends whose good opinion I most highly value, fancy that the interval of my absence has left some traces of improvement with me; and my sister assures me that the general belief is, that I have passed my time in profitable reading, whereas, in truth, I have done nothing, save finding a little leisure to reflect. And though I would not, were I questioned, falsify a single passage in my history, I would rather, at least for the present, that things remained as they are. Therefore, Mr. O'Donagough, if you will have the kindness not to urge the disclosure of my name, I shall really feel it as a great obligation."

"Is it your wish, then, that we should still call you Mr. Steady?" demanded Mr. O'Donagough, gravely.

This was a trying question; for had the young man answered it sincerely, he could only have said that he trusted no circumstances were likely to occur in which there would be any necessity for his being addressed by him or his family at all. But to utter this, was of course impossible; and after a moment's hesitation, he replied, "Yes, sir."

Another silence followed, which, like the former one, was at length broken by "Jack."

"I believe, Mr. O'Donagough, that we may now turn back again," said he; "and I beg you to accept my thanks for your obliging attention to my foolish story."

Mr. O'Donagough followed the movement made by his companion, and turned about to retrace his steps to Brompton; but he was not fully satisfied with the manner in which the conference appeared likely to conclude, and ere he had taken many steps, he said,

"Will you, before we part, permit me to make one observation, my dear sir?"

The young man bowed his willingness to hear it.

"It is never wise," resumed Mr. O'Donagough, "believe me, sir, it is never wise to repose a half-confidence in any man. I will not charge myself with any greater infirmity of curiosity than I believe affects all the rest of us; but neither will I attempt to deny that I do feel, and shall feel a desire, perfectly idle, as I am ready to confess, to learn your real name. You

must be aware that the generality of men might feel this without confessing it; but I have still a very fresh remembrance of the amiable manner in which your gay spirits beguiled the tedium of our long voyage, and I cannot resist the friendly feeling which prompts me to advise your trusting me with a name, which I will tell you frankly, cannot be long hidden from me. You will, perhaps, as the season advances, be likely to meet me more frequently in London society than you may expect. Though I have no secrets to keep me silent, I am not much given to talk of my own family and connections, or you would probably know by this time, that I am highly connected, as well as my wife, who you may perhaps have heard mention her family."

"No, sir, never," replied the young man, drily, and with a feeling, not, perhaps, very carefully concealed, that he did not feel any great interest on the subject.

"I think you told me you were in the army?" said Mr. O'Donagough.

"I did, sir," replied the *ci-devant* Jack, with some haughtiness; "but I did not imagine the information could give you any right to cross-question me."

"Believe me, I have no such intention; I was about to convey information, not to seek it; and if you will judge me fairly, you must, I think, perceive that my only possible motive for pursuing this conversation, is to prevent your fancying yourself more secure from all chance of my discovering what you wish to conceal than you really are. I alluded to your profession, sir, because I conceive that it renders it almost certain you must know the name of General Hubert."

"Know the name of General Hubert?" repeated the young man, suddenly standing still, and looking earnestly in the face of his companion, "most assuredly I know his name. May I inquire your reason for asking the question?"

"The general's lady is my wife's niece," quietly replied Mr. O'Donagough.

The effect of this announcement, which was made at random, without the slightest idea that the general's name was better known to his companion than that of any other officer of equal rank, was sufficiently strong to convince the speaker that his young listener was, at least, in some degree in his power. The youth changed colour, began to speak, then suddenly checked himself, and, at length, ejaculated more as if thinking aloud than with the purpose of making any communication, "This is, indeed, a most unexpected coincidence!"

"Are you acquainted with the general?" said Mr. O'Donagough, without appearing to notice his agitation.

"Very well—very much—I am very much acquainted with

him," stammered the young man in reply, and then added rapidly, and as if from the impulse of a sudden determination, "It must, indeed, be in vain for me to attempt any further concealment from you, Mr. O'Donagough. May I hope that in giving you my full confidence, I am giving it to a friend who will kindly seek to assist rather than to thwart me?"

With an air of candour and sincere good-will that was really touching, Mr. O'Donagough stood still for a moment, and extending both his hands received that of his companion between them.

"Be very sure of it, my dear young friend!" said he, cordially shaking and pressing the hand he held. "Be very sure of it—I can have no motive on earth for betraying a confidence that does me both honour and pleasure. Tell me your real name, 'dear Jack,' and it shall be henceforth numbered among those of the friends whom I most desire to serve."

"I am Sir Henry Seymour," said the young man, and so saying, he withdrew his hand as if by a movement that was involuntary, yet at the same moment declared himself much obliged, and quite confident that Mr. O'Donagough would faithfully keep the promise he had given him.

"Now, then, let us return to the ladies, my dear Sir Henry," said the well-pleased Mr. Allen O'Donagough.

"You are very good, but I must beg you to excuse me," replied his companion; "I have, in fact, business which obliges me to visit the Horse-guards immediately. Pray make my compliments to the ladies. Good morning!"

"But for God's sake don't go, my dear Sir Henry, till you tell me where I can find you again! Besides, I have fifty things to say to you. I will walk a little way towards the Horse-guards with you. I want you to tell me beyond all things, how such a gay young fellow as you are, ever came to be so *very much acquainted* with my stiff nephew-in-law General Hubert?"

"Sir Edward Stephenson was my guardian," replied Sir Henry Seymour, with ill-concealed reluctance.

"Ay, ay, that explains it—Lady Stephenson is Hubert's sister. I don't know Sir Edward as yet; but what a capital good fellow his brother Frederic is! We have just parted from him at Brighton. Did you ever visit him there, Sir Henry? The fine fellow has found out the only good house in the place, and famous feeds he gives there, I promise you. What a pretty little toy his wife is, isn't she? So like a wax doll—but she is a nice little creature too, so friendly where she takes a fancy! Patty was a prodigious favourite, and though she is too young to go out much without her mother, I did not quite like to refuse, because it was such a near connection, and I saw so plainly

that she meant to be kind and hoped to be an advantage to our young exotic. But to tell you the truth, my dear fellow, she was a *little* too good-natured to our dear Agnes's second son Compton, who, *entre nous* be it spoken, was much sweeter upon his cousin Patty than I quite approved. I don't like love-making between such very near relations; and though it was as clear as light that my girl had no particular fancy for him—in fact, she always seemed to be thinking of something else, God knows what—though it was most perfectly clear that Patty did not very much like it, the good-natured Nora would constantly ask him every evening that we were there, and that, in fact, was constantly. However, he is young enough to forget it, and we must trust to that."

All this wild-sounding rattle, so unlike the grave and meditative tone which O'Donagough had been practising with General Hubert, was not assumed without a purpose; or rather, it was not assumed without many purposes. It was necessary, in the the first place, to establish beyond the possibility of doubt, the important truth that he was what he declared himself to be, namely, the near connection and intimate associate of General Hubert, himself, and everybody belonging to him. It was important, too, that Sir Henry Seymour should be made to understand that the blooming Patty was already an object of tender attention to others; and, beyond all else, it was important that his own manners with the young baronet should, from the first, assume that air of easy gossiping frankness which was, as he had often found, the most certain prelude to profitable intimacy.

The first item in this list of reasons might have sufficed, had Mr. O'Donagough been fully aware of the weight it carried with it. At the first statement of near connection between the families of Hubert and O'Donagough, the young man's heart swelled with indignant incredulity; but the mass of evidence contained in the familiar mention of the whole race, by a person of Mr. O'Donagough's age and appearance, together with an assumption of relationship, which, however improbable, was not likely to have been invented, succeeded in convincing him that such was the fact; and the moment this was achieved, all that followed was wholly superfluous. Nothing like a cold return for offered civility was to be feared from Sir Henry Seymour towards any one who could boast the advantage of such a relationship. His attachment to the whole Hubert family was, in fact, unbounded; he considered himself under the deepest obligation to them for their constant kindness to his young sister, and was not likely to forget the lenient gentleness with which his own errors had been treated. Yet, though all this was likely very greatly to influence his conduct, it could not alter his feelings, and he groaned in spirit when, having at last got rid of his ship

acquaintance, he meditated on all the irksome annoyances to which this most unfortunate re-encounter was likely to lead.

That its effect on the other parties was quite as much opposed to this, as the positions assigned to the North and South Poles, need hardly be mentioned. The calculating Mr. O'Donagough seemed to tread on air as he paced back to Brompton, after accompanying his new favourite to the archway of the Horse-guards. Visions of little profitable evenings passed at home; of his name set down, and favourably balloted for, at fashionable clubs; of his own hospitalities returned, by dinners with the gay young guardsman; and finally of a match for his blooming Patty, which would not only gratify all his ambitious wishes for her, but insure to himself, as firmly at least as anything could, the power of holding on to the class among whom it was the darling desire of his heart to move—all seemed to flash before him in such bright but palpable distinctness, that he felt the glorious game to be entirely in his own hands. He had, in one word, got possession of the young man's secret, and it depended on himself to make a good use of it.

He found the two Miss Perkinses returned when he reached their dwelling; and the gabble of female tongues which greeted his ears, as he mounted to the drawing-room, was delightful to him, for it sounded like a flourish of trumpets announcing the return of a victor. If they were thus joyous with what they knew already, what would their feelings be when they should learn all of which he had so skilfully achieved the knowledge?

No shadow of mystery or reserve was now left to injure the happy union between the Perkinses and O'Donagoughs, and it was therefore with unmitigated freedom that the anxious mother exclaimed, as he entered, "Now then, out with it, Donny! what is his real name, after all?"

Mr. O'Donagough looked upon the little circle with a benignant smile.

"Don't stand grinning there, papa!" cried Patty, rushing towards him, and seizing upon the collar of his coat, with the consciousness that he and his news at that moment particularly belonged to herself. "Tell us all you know this very moment, or you shall find that you had better not tease me."

"Tease you, my beauty? No, faith, I must not tease you any more; for I must say, for a lady of fifteen you have got up as nice a little love affair as the most prudent parent could desire. The gentleman is Sir Henry Seymour, ladies, and, as I have every reason to believe, a man of large fortune and high connections."

"Good gracious! Only think!" said Miss Perkins the elder. "My adored Patty, how I wish you joy!" said Miss Perkins the younger.

"Nobody in their senses could ever doubt that my girl was likely to do well," was pronounced by Mrs. O'Donagough, with infinite dignity and very stately composure; while Patty, who, whatever she might come to hereafter, had not yet attained such perfect self-command, started back, and joyously clapping her hands as she bounded in a prodigious jump from the floor, exclaimed, "Shall I be my lady, then, when I am Jack's wife? Shall I, papa, upon your life and honour?"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THIS adventure made a considerable change in the proceedings of Mr. O'Donagough. A very few inquiries sufficed to assure him that Sir Henry Seymour was a young man of large and unencumbered estate, with the accumulated product of fifteen years' minority just placed at his own disposal. That he was, moreover, of a gay and pleasure-loving temperament, and conceived to be exceedingly liberal in his expenditure, and generous in disposition. It was not likely that a man of Mr. O'Donagough's discernment could be insensible to the value of such a character, or in the least degree indifferent to the probable advantages it might bring to all who were fortunate enough to fall into intimate connection with it. Neither was there any danger that he should undervalue the degree of influence which his knowledge of the young man's private affairs was likely to give him. With all this working strongly together in his brain, he soon came to the conclusion that no half measures could suit the present position of his affairs; and without confessing, even to the wife of his bosom, that he had greatly changed his immediate plans, he set about looking for a house in good earnest, and determined that it should be such a one as should aid all the bold projects he had in view.

Had he deemed it "wisest, best," Mr. O'Donagough was not without the means of furnishing a splendid mansion in very showy style, and yet not leaving a single morsel of lacker, or *ormolu*, unpaid for. But he was far too clever a man to risk on any speculation a single sixpence more than was needful to give it a fair chance of success; and he, therefore, decided upon selecting a ready-furnished house as the scene of his first attempt on a large scale, in London. Should it fail, should vexatious accidents of any kind arise to cut short his career, the loss might be easily calculated, and a retreat easily effected.

His resolution once taken, he lost no time in putting it into execution. An extremely gay-looking residence in Curzon-street, in the rent of which the proprietor was disposed to make

some sacrifice, for the sake of letting it for a year, and at an unfavourable season, fixed him at once; he agreed, without difficulty, to pay the rent in advance; and exactly one week from the day on which he had been let into the confidence of Sir Henry Seymour, he informed his wife and daughter that he had secured for their use, for the year next ensuing, an elegant mansion in one of the most fashionable streets in London.

The effect of this news upon Mrs. O'Donagough was very like that of intoxication; only that the symptoms continued to show themselves for weeks, instead of hours. At first she began to talk with exceeding rapidity, seemingly indifferent whether any one listened to her or not. Then she laughed, much and often, having no obvious cause for it whatever; and then she would sit in strange abstractedness, with a look that might have been mistaken for a sign of headache, or approaching somnolency, but which in truth betokened the very reverse; being rather an evidence of faculties particularly awake, and intent on very high and mighty objects.

Patty was altogether in a state of mind and spirits which rendered the fine house of small comparative importance, though had she at any moment been told that

There's no such thing,

it is probable, to use her own phraseology, that she would have "cried her eyes out." But so predominant were the ideas that she was certainly going to have Jack for a husband, and to be called "my lady," that no subjects of lesser interest could long retain possession of her memory.

The friendship of the two Miss Perkinses was at this time invaluable, and so thoroughly aware did Mrs. O'Donagough become of the absolute necessity of having some one on whom she could discharge her thoughts, that she induced her husband to abandon entirely his visionary friends at Richmond, and confess that he found it was quite necessary they should remain in their "little bit of a lodging," till their "own house" was ready for them. This obviated all difficulties, and the excellent Miss Perkinses trotted daily from Brompton to the bit of a lodging, and from the bit of a lodging to Curzon-street, with a resolute perseverance that nothing but the most devoted friendship could have inspired.

"Beautiful rooms! ain't they, Louisa? Isn't the third drawing-room a perfect paradise, Matilda? What a place for flirting, girls! That sofa in the recess is the prettiest thing I ever saw in my life," said Mrs. O'Donagough, for the twenty-seventh time, as her two friends and her daughter roamed about the house, from garret to cellar, on the third day after it was taken. "How I do wish they would get these tiresome beds

put up! Isn't it too hard to have such a house as this, and not be able to get into it?—Donny! Donny! Where in the world is your father got to, Patty? He *never* is in the right place.—By-the-by, dears, I must leave off calling him Donny, musn't I? It will never do in such a drawing-room as this. To be sure it is quite unaccountable how one does get into foolish, vulgar ways, sometimes, and it's a proof, isn't it, that one always ought to keep oneself up, even if one sees nobody nor nothing? However, there is no great danger of my not getting out of it again—my first recollections are of the most refined kind. This is a charming house, to be sure, but no more to be compared to Silverton-park than chalk to cheese. I shall like to see our friends the officers here, Matilda; won't it be nice?"

These words instantly brought the lady she addressed to her side; for though till that moment she had been entirely engrossed by her friend, the future Lady Seymour, there was in them a charm, powerful as magic, to which the endearing "I say, Matilda!" of her young friend was, in comparison, but idle breath.

"Dearest Mrs. O'Donagough!" returned the fluttered and flattered young lady, gliding across the room to her, with a movement not unlike that of a figure cut in paper and blown across a table by the artificer,—"dearest Mrs. O'Donagough, how I long to see you installed with all your proper style and state about you, and receiving company in your own elegant and graceful way. To be sure there never was any one so perfectly made by nature, as one may say, to give parties as you are. Your manners, your kindness, your person, your very style of dress, all seem formed on purpose for it. I am sure it is a blessing, and an honour, and a happiness to know you."

"Well, well, 'Tilda, we shall see, we shall see. By-the-by, I'll tell you what I should like as well as anything in the whole job, and that is, making my old ramshorn aunt Betsy come to see me here. Won't I make her remember the bees and the bread and milk?"

Notwithstanding all the eager attention with which Miss Matilda looked up into her face—most sincerely wishing to understand every word she uttered—there was a mystery in this allusion which defied her sagacity, stretched, as it was, to the very utmost; and she could only reply by laying her hand with a fond squeeze on the plump arm of her magnificent friend, and repeating, with a little coaxing laugh, "Dearest Mrs. O'Donagough!"

"But that's neither here nor there," resumed the great lady, recollecting herself. "I was thinking of bygone times, when that crabbed old soul was a perfect tyrant to me. I don't mean,

of course, that she was not always living in very high style, as a person of her noble birth and immense possessions ought to do; but you know, my dear, many old people, both rich and poor, like nothing so well as tormenting young ones; and what I said about the bees and bread and milk, came from recollecting the time when she kept bees for her own amusement in some most elegant golden hives, and then, instead of letting me look at them, ordered the footman to take me to the housekeeper, or the lady's-maid, I'm sure I forget which, to eat bread and milk for supper. So spiteful of her! wasn't it, Matilda?"

"Spiteful indeed! dearest Mrs O'Donagough! I cannot conceive how any human being could ever have the heart to be otherwise than kind and affectionate, and, in fact, altogether doting upon you!" replied Miss Matilda. "I don't suppose there was a person," she continued, "so made in every way to be liked and loved as you are. I am sure, Louisa and I sit by the hour together, and have done, ever since we first knew you, talking of nothing in the world but your particular manner of being delightful to everybody. Poor dear Louisa, you know, is very shy, but she declares that in your company she forgets it entirely, and feels as easy and as happy, almost, as if she was quite by herself."

"I am very glad to make Louisa happy, and you too, my dear," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, swelling a little, as she was wont to do when called upon to assert her dignity; "but, to tell you the real truth, my dear Miss Matilda Perkins, I shall feel that I owe it to myself, when I get into this house, and to my family also, to keep up with most people that sort of dignity and reserve which my station requires. I can assure you that Silverton-park, when I was quite a newly-married and very young woman, though it was celebrated through all the west of England as a scene of the most delightful hospitality, never witnessed the slightest attempt at undue familiarity from any of its innumerable guests towards me."

As this was uttered with appropriate accent and attitude, the soul of the gentle Matilda seemed to die within her as she listened to it. But Mrs. O'Donagough, on perceiving the effect she had produced, felt satisfied that she might again relax a little with safety, and immediately added,

"But you and your sister are particular friends, you know, and I shall never insist upon any alteration in your manners when we are quite by ourselves. When there are strangers present, of course, you will understand that there should be a difference."

"What *do* you stay prosing there for, Matilda?" cried Patty at this moment, turning from an unprofitable examination of the empty street. "Come here, can't you? you know

I have got lots of things to say, and you may just as well leave mamma alone—Louisa will do for her to count over the chairs and tables with."

"What a madcap!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, with a graceful air of elegant indulgence. "Go to her, my dear, and send your sister Louisa to me. She is quite lost, poor thing, in the delight of walking about these pretty rooms—for after all, I can't say I consider them as anything more than merely pretty. However, they will do very well till that wild girl of mine is sobered down into a woman of fashion, and a wife. And then I flatter myself that Mr. Allen O'Donagough will think it right and proper to take me into a square to live. This house is all very well for a street; but I very much doubt if Sir Henry—get along, Matilda," added the tender mother, pointing to the frowning beauty, who stood impatiently waiting for her listener while this harangue went on. "Go on to her, dear, and tell her she must never let Sir Henry see such a face as that!"

Miss Matilda, who had stood between the mother and daughter during Mrs. O'Donagough's last speech, like a bit of rubbish on the wave of a retreating tide, seemingly returning from time to time, but really becoming more distant at every movement, joyfully accepted this dismission, and ere another moment had passed was enjoying herself in the balcony of the front room, with Patty once more hanging upon her arm.

"How can you be such a fool, Matilda, as to stand listening for an hour together to mamma's humdrums?" said the young lady, judiciously placing herself and her friend as much out of sight of those within the windows as the premises would allow. "A child of five years old could manage better than you do!"

"Upon my word, Patty, you are out there," replied her friend; "it is from no want of wit or will either, on my part, if I leave you for a moment; for, goodness knows, I had rather be talking with you than anything else in the world—excepting, you know, when you happen to be engaged in another way; or," she added after a pause, and with a deep sigh—"or if poor Foxcroft was even again to steal into my heart with his delicious converse."

"Oh, for that matter, I never want to spoil sport, any more than you do, Matilda. We are both of us good-natured girls in that way. 'Do as you would be done by,' that is our motto, isn't it? But I have no notion of your leaving me, with my finger in my eye, because I have got no one to speak to, while you stand palavering with mamma," said Miss O'Donagough.

"But I must, Patty, if it is her will and pleasure, you know. I can tell you, if you don't know it already, that your mamma expects a great deal more attention and ceremony, and all that sort of thing now, a great deal more indeed than she did at

Brighton. In short, she says so herself, openly and plainly; and I see as plain as daylight, that if I am not very attentive and respectful, all the fat will be in the fire, and what will become then of all the happiness we expect together?" returned her friend.

Once for all, Matilda, I'll tell you plainly, that you had better mind your hits between mamma and me. I won't bear to be neglected for any one; and if you don't choose to be my particular friend, and stand by me, through thick and thin, without caring a pin for anybody else, somebody else shall, that's all. I have no notion of mamma setting herself up, for no other reason in the world than just because my Jack happens to be a Sir. And who has the best right to set themselves up because of that, I wonder? So you will just please to take your choice, Miss Matilda."

"Oh! my darling, only Patty!" returned the terrified favourite, in an accent which seemed to predict a shower of tears; "how can you speak so cruelly? Do you not know how I dote upon you? Don't you know, that excepting my poor dear Foxcroft, to whom I am determined to be as faithful as you have been to your Jack, don't you know that excepting him, there is no living creature in the whole wide world, that I love and dote upon as I do you."

"Very well, then—don't let us say any more about it; but tell me, Matilda, what do you think I ought to say the first time my beautiful sweetheart asks me downright to marry him?"

"Say, my dearest creature? Why, just at the *very* first, I suppose you must say that you are too young to think of such a thing."

"But, suppose he should take me at my word, Matilda? Suppose he should really go away again, for heaven knows how long, just as he did when he went to Sheerness, you know? What would become of me then?"

"Oh, you must take care of that, dearest! you must take care that he does not out-and-out suppose you are quite in earnest. Common sense teaches one, you know, when one says anything of that kind, to do it with a sort of look, or a hesitation, or something or other that shall make a man understand, if he is not a very great fool indeed, that you don't mean to kill him with cruelty."

"Well, then, that will be got over without danger, for my Sir Henry Jack is no fool, I promise you," replied Patty, exultingly. "But I say, Matilda, how long do you think it will be before we shall be all right and ready to invite him?"

"Quite directly, I should think,—as soon as you have got into the house, I mean," replied her patient friend, who had listened to the same question, and made the same answer about

a hundred and fifty times since the Curzon-street house had been taken.

Meanwhile Mr. O'Donagough, who, in his own way, and in a less demonstrative manner, was quite as desirous of getting things *en train* as either Patty or her mother, did an immense deal of business in a wonderfully short space of time, and performed it all with as much skill as despatch.

It would not be easy to paint Mrs. O'Donagough's ecstasy, when she found that her generous husband intended she should possess both a very tall footman, and a very little tiger. It was, as she told Miss Louisa Perkins, a proof of such lover-like attention, as she never could forget.

"Such a multitude of people, you know, my dear, are absolutely *obliged* to do with only one or the other, that I feel very greatly touched, I must confess, by his so positively insisting that I should have both. Oh, my dear Louisa, how heartily I wish that you and poor Matilda, too, had exactly such a husband as Mr. O'Donagough! You have no idea—I am quite sure it is impossible that you should have any idea—how excessively kind he is to me."

Good Miss Louisa fancied she had remembered a few little scenes not quite accordant with this testimony; but she was far too obliging a person to remind Mrs. O'Donagough, at this happy moment, of circumstances which had occurred at one less so, and therefore only replied by uttering a sigh, in a sort of coaxing cadence long drawn out, which might be written thus: Ough —ugh—gh!

"Poor things!" muttered Mrs. O'Donagough, as she bustled off to receive and examine a dingy-looking woman, who came as a candidate for the honour of being her cook, and who, like all others desirous of a place in her household, presented herself at a given hour in the grand drawing-room of Curzon-street. "Poor things! what a shocking misfortune it is, to be sure, not getting a husband at all! Yet! bless me! so thin as they are, and with such light little eyes, what could they expect?"

At length the important day arrived, that was to convert Mr. O'Donagough from a *lodger* into a *householder;* a transition which, from his lively recollection of past events, amused, as much as delighted him. The footman, the tiger, the cook, and the housemaid, were all made aware that though "the family" had been constantly coming to town to look after the house, they were, nevertheless, resident at Richmond. This was a sort of fact, which Mr. O'Donagough himself was particulary anxious to establish, knowing, as he sometimes hinted to his wife, the *real* value of appearances a good deal better than she did. He therefore arranged the ceremony of their *entrée* into their mansion in the following manner:—Mrs. O'Donagough and Patty having been despatched by an early

coach to an hotel at Richmond, the husband and the father superintended the removal of all trunks, boxes, bundles, and baskets, by a cart from "the lodgings" to "the house," and then mounting into an omnibus, he rejoined the ladies, indulged them very liberally with sandwiches, cheesecakes, and porter, and then handed them into a postchaise, which four horses drew at full gallop, to the inexpressible delight of Patty, to the mansion in Curzon-street, where they were received by the footman, the tiger, the housemaid, and the cook, in a style which caused emotions in the breast of Mrs. O'Donagough more easily imagined than described.

A well-spread tea-table awaited them; and it was then and there that Mr. O'Donagough thought fit to enter, more at length than he had yet done, into a statement of what he wished and expected from the two ladies under the novel circumstances in which they were now placed. The conversation was, however, opened by his lady.

"Well, my Patty!" she exclaimed, contriving by a skilful movement of her impressive person to bring her luxurious arm-chair a little nearer to the fire. "Isn't this glorious?"

"I should like it better if there was more company," replied her candid daughter.

"That is very natural, my dear," observed her father, gravely: "but it is not civil to say so. And now we are on the chapter of manners, it is just as well to tell you both at once, that I must desire and insist that you are very careful on that point. 'Manners make the man,' you know, and they make the woman too, I promise you, quite as much as fine eyes and a fresh complexion. You must both of you be exceedingly careful to be always lady-like and perfectly genteel in everything you say and do."

Mrs. O'Donagough became exceedingly red in the face while this was said. Not Mrs. Malaprop when her "parts of speech" were attacked, could feel more indignant than she did at this insinuation respecting the perfection of her manners.

"This *is* something new!" she exclaimed, while her expansive bosom heaved almost convulsively; "this *is* breaking out in a new place, Mr. O'Donagough, I must say. And pray what are you going to put into my daughter's head next? If my manners are not good enough to be a model for her, I should like very much to know where she is to find one. From my very earliest childhood, my manners have been remarked, and it is not for me to repeat what has been said of them. But this I *will* say, that I believe you are the first that ever found out there was anything in my manners to be mended."

"Upon my honour, my dear, I did not mean to say anything at all affronting about your manners. Of course I admire them extremely!" replied Mr. O'Donagough. "But Patty is very

young, you know, as yet, and therefore I think it is as well to give her a hint that she must be careful not to be too frolicsome and rampageous if she intends to be my Lady Seymour. The young man, you see, is a good deal with Mrs. Hubert and that set, and I'll bet you what you will, that though he may be in love with our Patty, owing to their old acquaintance on board ship, which is quite natural, so handsome and affectionate as she is, yet still, I'll venture a good bet, he'd say, if he was asked, that Mrs. Hubert's manners, and her daughters' too, were exactly what is thought most elegant by people of high fashion; and that's what you must try to appear, if you can, you know."

Scarcely were these dangerous words uttered, ere he was assailed by both wife and daughter, who in the same instant burst upon him, each trying, as it seemed, to outscream the other.

"You don't mean to say," vociferated the elder lady, "that any living being in their senses could give the preference to the cold, starched, hateful, old-maidish manners of Agnes Willoughby over mine? MINE! Gracious Heaven! That I should ever live to hear you say such a thing as that, Major—Mr. I mean—Mr. Allen O'Donagough! I should like to hear Lord Mucklebury's opinion on the point."

While these words were being uttered on one side of him, a shrill, young voice assailed him on the other with, "You think Jack would like Miss Longshanks Elizabeth better than me, do you? Well then, let him take her—that's all I have got to say about it."

"Wheugh!" whistled Mr. O'Donagough, extending his hands, as if to drive away a swarm of stinging flies, "what a racket you do make, ladies, about nothing at all. You don't quite catch my meaning, I perceive; but perhaps, by degrees, I may be able to make you understand me better. However, we will say no more about it now, if you please. And, by-the-by, my Barnaby, there is something else to talk of, which I dare say you will think more agreeable. You have mentioned Lord Mucklebury; and do you know, my dear, I should like exceedingly to find him out, that you might renew your acquaintance, and introduce me to him. I will promise not to be jealous, and I rather think he is one of the sort of people I should like to know."

There was in this speech wherewithal to heal very satisfactorily all the wounds inflicted by the former one. The conversation immediately flowed into a most agreeable channel, wherein a future of very great and hopeful splendour was sketched. Patty, indeed, fell asleep in the midst of it, which was probably owing to some rather business-like details which entered into the discussion; but scarcely ever had the *ci-devant* major and his Barnaby passed an evening in more perfect harmony.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

It so happened that the first visitor introduced into Mrs. O'Donagough's new drawing-room, by the intervention of the tall footman and the little page, was Mr. Foxcroft.

This gentleman, in consequence of having some still unsettled business to transact with Mr. O'Donagough, had kept up sufficient correspondence with him, to make him acquainted with his address; but it had not, as it seemed, been of so confidential a nature, as to include any description of his present abode, or manner of living. It was, therefore, with very undisguised astonishment, that this Brighton friend looked round him upon all the finery and all the grandeur which Mrs. O'Donagough, her daughter, her servants, and her drawing-rooms presented to his view.

Some people might perhaps have thought this exceedingly uncivil, but Mrs. O'Donagough was not one of them; and the delight with which she witnessed his surprise, was as little concealed on her part, as the surprise itself was on his.

"How d'ye do, Captain Foxcroft? ha! ha! ha! How you do stare about you!" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, very cordially extending her hand. "Why, don't you know Patty again? I declare that's too bad, as if you never saw her elegantly dressed at Brighton."

"I beg your pardon a thousand times, my dear Miss Patty!" exclaimed the visitor, striding across the floor, and shaking and pressing the young lady's hand with very affectionate vehemence; "for goodness' sake do not suppose I did not know you! I am sure if I had seen you sitting upon a throne, I could never for a moment have mistaken your charming face for any in the whole world;—only I had no idea, certainly, that your London residence was so completely elegant."

"Isn't that capital, Patty?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, with another hearty laugh. "Just look here, Foxcroft," she added, majestically leading the way to the second, and then to the third drawing-room. "I think on the whole this room is quite perfect—because of the recess, you see, and the elegant drapery about it. Isn't that a beautiful looking-glass? Of course you observe that all the chimneys have looking-glasses. That's a great advantage. There are a monstrous number of houses, and very elegant ones, too, where there is but one; but nobody can tell that hasn't observed it, what an extraordinary difference it makes. To be sure, Mr. O'Donagough is a man of the very best of tastes,—and I must say, as liberal as he is elegant. Sit down, Captain Foxcroft, sit down upon the sofa; we don't at all mind using the sofas, though they are, certainly, excessively beautiful. But what good is there in having beautiful things if

one's afraid to use them? Nothing, I think, shows a greater vulgarity, than that sort of carefulness, particularly in a house that one hires furnished. Heaven knows we pay enough for it!"

"Of course, ma'am," replied the gentleman, "nobody can doubt that, and a delightful thing it is to be able to do things in such a style. I hope Mr. O'Donagough is well? I took the liberty of asking for him, and the servant said he was at home. There is a little business that I want to speak to him about, if he is quite at leisure."

"I believe he is in the library, Captain Foxcroft," replied Mrs. O'Donagough with much dignity. "Ring the bell, Patty. I will send the page to inform him you are here."

When Mrs. O'Donagough from any accidental circumstance, or for any particular reason of her own, felt herself exalted higher in the scale of created beings than ordinary, her voice underwent a singular change, not easy to be described. It was as if some unusual fulness had arisen in her throat, which, while it obliged her to place her head in a particular position, and to add a third tier to the redundancy of her exuberant chin, appeared to elongate every word she uttered, and to give a sort of swelled and preternatural roundness to every syllable. "Oy cawn vainthure to asshurre y-you, Cawptin Fawxcroft," she said, as soon as she had given the message to the little priggish button-bedecked boy who answered the bell, "Oy cawn vainthure, I awm certawin, to asshurre y-you, that eef Mr. O'Donagough is not veery partiqularly engaaged, he will not refewse to receeeve you."

Poor Mr. Foxcroft, who was come upon some rather awkward business, felt this sublimity to his fingers'-ends, and rather to escape from the danger of being overwhelmed by any more of it, than from any wish at that moment of enjoying the playful vivacity of Miss Patty, he suddenly rose and crossed the room to where, as usual, she was lounging upon a couch placed close against the window, and looking into the street.

"I hope you have not forgotten an old friend, Miss Patty, because you have got into a new house?" said he.

"No, that I havn't, Captain Foxcroft," replied Miss Patty, well pleased, as it seemed, by this address; "I was only waiting to see how long it would be before you would have done palavering with mamma. None of your old friends forget you, I can tell you that."

Delighted at finding that one, at least, of the family remained much in the same state of refinement as heretofore, Mr. Foxcroft expressed very warmly his gratitude for the consolatory assurance, adding, "I need hardly tell you, my dear Miss Patty, that there is no change on my part."

"So far, so good," replied Patty, with very friendly exulta-

tion, "and I suppose I may repeat that, mayn't I, wherever I like?"

"To be sure you may, my dear Miss Patty!" he rejoined with an air of sudden intelligence; for, in fact, he at that moment recollected, for the first time since he entered the fine drawing-room, that *one* of his lady-loves was, or had been, the elected *amie de la maison*. To say the truth, Mr. Foxcroft's personal concerns had occupied him, of late, so exclusively, that the remembrance of the fair Matilda had melted from his recollection altogether; and not till the marked emphasis which Patty placed on the word "wherever," set him to meditate on her meaning, did her idea recur to him. Then, however, "a sudden thought struck him," that it might be worth while, under existing circumstances, to renew the acquaintance. A good footing at the house of Mr. O'Donagough was essential to him, and it mattered little how it was obtained. Female influence was always powerful, and, moreover, it was not quite impossible that he might find, upon inquiry, even stronger reasons still for renewing his tender intercourse with the susceptible Matilda. As these thoughts passed rapidly through his head, his eyes became animated, and expressed that sort of second-hand tenderness, with which gentlemen of his tone and manner, are apt to address the young-lady *confidantes* of their beloveds.

"How excessively kind it is of you to take so much interest in me, Miss Patty!" he said, hanging his head a little on one side, and pressing his hands fervently together; "I am sure your eyes can read my heart, and you are quite at liberty to repeat what you find there to———to those, you know, who are in your confidence."

"Well! that's fair and open, any way," replied Patty, she shall know what you say, trust me for that."

At this moment the page returned with his master's compliments, and "he would be happy to see the gentleman in the library." Giving a look of confidential intelligence to Patty, and a bow of prodigious respect to Mrs. O'Donagough, Mr. Foxcroft followed the page, who ushered him into a back parlour, large enough to have been called a library had there been books in it, but of these the show was so scanty, as almost to escape a cursory observation. However, there were not wanting any of the various other articles, which, in the minds of many, as essentially constitute a gentleman's library as the books themselves. Thus, there was an oblong table with drawers at its sides, and covered with leather, on which was spread abundance of manly litter, among which might be found pen, ink, and paper. On another table were several newspapers, together with a boot-hook and a shoeing-horn. There were, moreover, among "the fixtures," two large cases, probably designed to accommodate such "silent friends" as the

owner might choose to invite; but as yet, none such had arrived at Mr. O'Donagough's bidding, and the glass doors sheltered nothing more erudite than Mr. O'Donagough's wardrobe, he having happily agreed in opinion with his lady, that he would find it very comfortable and convenient to make the library his dressing room. Notwithstanding the want of books, however, Mr. O'Donagough was reading, and this, together, with the literary-leisure air communicated by a printed calico dressing-gown, made him feel that to all intents and purposes he was receiving his friend in his library. But though surrounded thus by dignity and ease, he condescended to rise, throw away the Sporting Magazine with which he was engaged, and hold out a hand to his friend.

"Oh! Foxcroft! I'm glad to see you, my good fellow. How did you manage to get leave? But you are too soon, now, by a month or two. There's no great business doing yet," said Mr. O'Donagough.

Mr. Foxcroft shook his head, and his face, naturally of rather lengthy proportions, grew longer still.

"Why, what the devil's the matter?" resumed the master of the library; "you look as doleful as if you had been in the pillory."

"It's all up with me, O'Donagough!" replied the guest; "I have been sent to the right about. But privately, observe. I was told that I had better sell out. So there are but two men in the regiment, Dashmore and Willis, of course, that know anything about it. This is better than if it was blown, but yet it is a cursed business, and I want you to give me your advice, as to what I had best do to help myself."

"Upon my word, Mr. Foxcroft," replied the prosperous Mr. O'Donagough, very gravely, "it is by no means in my power to say. I was in hopes you were come to settle your little account with me, which certainly would be convenient at this moment, from the immense sums I have had to pay for getting into this house, furnished as it is. You have been in the drawing-room, I believe; I need hardly tell you that it has sucked up a tolerable lot of ready money."

"Of course it has," replied the melancholy-looking ex-lieutenant, "and one great reason for my coming to you was, to consult what I could do in order to get the means of paying you. As a man of honour, O'Donagough, you must be aware that my debt to you is what lies heaviest upon my mind, and that, if you will give me a helping hand, the paying you will be my first object."

"No doubt of it, no doubt of it," replied Mr. O'Donagough, "because, of course, I need not tell you that if that is not attended to all's up. You and I have lived long enough to understand that, you know. But as to coming to me, and asking me, in

this way, what you are to do, I must say it looks rather wild and scrambling, Mr. Foxcroft, and not very promising for your debts of honour, certainly."

"I am ready to do anything, O'Donagough! But Heaven knows at this moment I know not where to turn for a pound."

"And upon my soul, sir, I don't know where to send you for one. There must have been some great imprudence, Mr. Foxcroft—some extremely awkward management, I am afraid, to have produced so very sudden a catastrophe; not but what I always thought it would be better for you to leave the regiment. Excepting just your own set, the men about you were the last in the world for you to get amongst. The fact is, that, generally speaking, the English army is not a profession to be carried on with—with any other. But, then, I always reckoned upon your selling out, sir, in a way which would have put you in funds to settle with your friends—I can't say that I had any idea you would manage matters so clumsily as you have done."

"For pity's sake, don't reproach me, O'Donagough! And, upon my honour, I don't deserve it, either; for it was a mere accident, and no blunder of mine whatever. It was a note that I sent by an orderly, and the rascal took it wrong."

"A note! Why you are not such a fool as to write down at full length in the morning, what you have been doing overnight, I suppose?"

"Not exactly. But the note was to Dashmore, and the fool took it to Groves, who opened it, as he says, without looking at the direction; and as it was only signed with a flourish in the shape of the ace of clubs and contained a few sporting allusions, the busybody took it to the colonel, pretending that he thought it was some joke offensive to the honour of the regiment. Then, of course, Dashmore was dragged over the coals, and after shuffling a little, which made matters a thousand times worse, he confessed that he rather thought it was Lieutenant Foxcroft's handwriting. So then I was closeted, and very politely advised to sell out."

"A parcel of precious idiots you seem to have been as I ever happened to hear of," observed Mr. O'Donagough, coolly; "and with such sort of management, I cannot say that I think it very likely you would profit by any advice of mine. Not to mention that there would be a pretty strong probability of my being mixed up in the scrape, if I were to present myself to the public eye as your particular friend, Mr. Foxcroft."

"The *public* can't possibly get hold of it, O'Donagough," replied the ex-lieutenant, eagerly, "for before I left Brighton, the regiment received orders to prepare for the West Indies."

"A lucky dog you are then," replied Mr. O'Donagough, with somewhat more of condescension in his manner. "

that case you have only to keep quiet till they are off, and then say you were obliged to sell out on account of your health."

"That is exactly what I meant to say," replied his comforted friend; "only I could not hide anything from you, O'Donagough, after your kindness in waiting about that piquet money. I promise you, I shall never know a happy moment till I have paid it, and anything you may happen to think of that may help me to start again, will be just that sum in your own pocket, you know."

"That's all very well, Foxcroft—but it's a devilish deal easier to say what you'll do with money when you get it, than to find out where it is to be had. I give you my honour and word that, just at this moment, I no more know what to set you at than if I had been born last week. When the season advances, perhaps, it is possible that I might find out some way or other in which you could be useful to me and make a little money into the bargain."

"And upon my honour, O'Donagough, that is just what I should best like. You are a man of genius, first-rate genius. I've seen enough already to know that, and I am one that would not stop at anything for a friend whom I admire and look up to as I do you. I won't play piquet with you again, because you are a devilish deal too good a player for me; but I'll be ready to do anything else that you may ask, and I'd be as true to you as your own shadow."

"But there's nothing to be done for the next two months at the very least," replied Mr. O'Donagough. "The Christmas holidays must be well over before there is a chance of getting a common whist party together, without dreaming of doing anything at the clubs—into the very best of which I expect to get by-and-by. And what are you to do in the meantime, Foxcroft? Bath or Cheltenham would serve your turn better than London, I should think."

"I wish you could tell me, my dear friend," said Mr. Foxcroft, abruptly, and with some little embarrassment, "whether, since you have been in town, you have found out anything at all certain and to be depended on respecting that Miss Perkins you know, that used to be so much at your house at Brighton? Should you judge from what you have seen, that she had anything independent worth thinking about?

"Upon my word, Foxcroft, I won't stand godfather to her ways and means. They seem to be living very decently, in a drawing-room apartment at Brompton, and I should suppose that whatever they have must be their own, and independent. But that is a question which must, as I conceive, be asked officially, before any positive information can be obtained. The only objection to this sort of plain sailing is, the awkward-

ness of getting off, if the thing is not likely to answer. But in this case I should not suppose there would be much difficulty about that either; I am pretty sure there is no brother in the case, and leaving town suddenly for a week or two would be all that was necessary."

"Well, then, my dear fellow," returned Mr. Foxcroft, "while waiting for more important business, I see no objection whatever to my bestowing as much time upon this as may suffice to ascertain whether there is anything to be got worth having. And I do assure you, that one of my chief motives for the speculation will be, the hope of speedily discharging my debt to you. But I must look to the ladies of your family for the means of setting about it. Do you think that Mrs. O'Donagough would object to taking me with her to call upon the Miss Perkinses?"

"Upon my word, I don't know, Mr. Foxcroft. Mrs. O'Donagough has no carriage at present, nor will the equipage I intend for her be ready till after Christmas. But I suppose the business may be set going, as well by your meeting here, as by paying the lady a visit at her home. If you see your way clearly enough to go on, there will be no need of having Mrs. O'Donagough to escort you on your expeditions to Brompton."

There was something of dignity and hauteur in this speech, which convinced the aspirant lover that it would be necessary for him to be rather more cautious in tone and demeanour than formerly. But he was far from being discouraged by this; on the contrary it only served to convince him that if there should prove some little difficulty in reaching again the rank of familiar household friend, which he had held at Brighton, it would be more worth having when he did attain it,—a mode of reasoning often acted upon by persons of the *ci-devant* lieutenant's class, with very excellent and satisfactory results.

As soon as Mr. O'Donagough had ceased speaking, Mr. Foxcroft rose from his chair, and drawing a card from his waistcoat pocket, laid it upon the table before his illustrious friend, saying, very respectfully, "For the present, my dear sir, I will detain you no more, either with my hopes or my misadventures. That is my address; and I feel confident that now I have put you in possession of my views, your kindness will induce you to give me the advantage of meeting the lady in question at your house, as soon as you can make it convenient to do so." These words were accompanied by a very grave look, and a bow of much ceremony, which seemed to announce the speaker's intention of immediately withdrawing, producing altogether on the mind of Mr. O'Donagough the comfortable conviction, that he should always be able to keep his inferiors at a distance, when he chose it; an idea which so greatly pleased him, that his manner instantly became as frank and familiar as in the days of his Brighton humility.

"No, no, Foxcroft! you must not go yet," he said. "Sit down again; I have fifty questions to ask about the set we used to meet at the billiard-room. And besides, you must not go, till I have settled with Mrs. O'Donagough for what day we shall ask the Perkinses. I don't think they are much engaged, so there will be no great difficulty about that. And—I say, Foxcroft, a small quantity of love-making at a time will do, won't it? You must not wear out all your pretty speeches at once, you know—so I suppose you will have no objection to a rubber, if I can happen to get two good hands to help us?"

Smiling inwardly, to think how well he was able to take the measure of his superb friend's greatness; and outwardly, to show how grateful he felt for all the kindness bestowed upon him, Mr. Foxcroft declared himself delighted at the idea of once more battling for the odd trick with so skilful an adversary; and reseating himself in the excellent arm-chair he had before occupied near the fire, determined to be as gossiping and agreeable as possible, in order to plant himself as firmly as heretofore in the good graces of the man whom he felt that fate had destined to be his patron.

Having indulged himself in the flight which has been recounted above, Mr. O'Donagough relaxed for the next hour into as familiar a strain of discourse as Mr. Foxcroft himself could have desired; and at length brought it to a conclusion, by saying, "Come along, my fine fellow! Let us mount to the drawing-room, and consult with Mrs. O'Donagough on this Perkins party."

Mr. Foxcroft, nothing loath, prepared to follow him; and as they mounted the stairs together, his loud, bold laugh preceded them, which caused Mrs. O'Donagough to observe that "It was plain enough he had been well received, or he would not laugh in that free and easy style."

"Well received?" repeated Miss Patty, sharply, "and why not, I should like to know? There are some people who admire him, I can tell you, whatever you may do, and though he has got gray hair and a big nose, that is no reason for you to be uncivil to him."

"Hoity toity, Miss Patty! who is going to be uncivil, I wonder? You have no more idea of dignity, and the sort of consequence attached to a certain style of living, than a baby. I wouldn't for the world be uncivil either to Foxcroft, or Dashmore, or Willis, or any old acquaintance whatever, and I am sure if the poor dear Sheepshanks were to come over, one and all, they would find me perfectly kind and condescending. But that need not prevent one's showing now and then that one knows what's what, and if you don't, take my word for it you'll——"

"I have brought Foxcroft back to you, my dear," said Mr.

O'Donagough, entering unceremoniously before his friend, "to fix a day for our asking him to dinner. You must come and dine with us, Foxcroft; if it is but once and away, for old acquaintance' sake, for you must know I don't mean to give regular dinners till the season begins. Mrs. O'Donagough will soon begin to receive company in an evening, once or twice a week perhaps. These are very good rooms for it, and I rather like a rubber you know. But I'm not fond of dinner company, except just in the season. It fatigues me, and, in short, I think it is a confounded bore. But we shall be often glad to see you of an evening, Foxcroft. However, this first time, as I said, you must come to dinner. What day shall it be, Mrs. O'D.? We'll have the Perkinses the same day, I think."

Mrs. O'Donagough was preparing her three chins, and her thick articulation of dignified words, in reply to this proposal, when she was abruptly checked by Patty's favourite hand-clapping, and the joyous exclamation which accompanied it: "That's right, papa! That will be capital fun, won't it? Oh my! How pleased they will be! That is, I mean about coming to dine here, the first time, and all. Of course I don't mean anything else. I'll go myself, mamma, see if I don't, to carry the invitation. Do you and papa fix the day, and I'll take care you shall have the company."

There was something so paralysing to hauteur and elegance in this jolly outbreak, that Mrs. O'Donagough

Changed her hand, and checked her pride,

as she answered, "Very well, dearest! You *shall* go yourself, if you wish it, and the page shall attend you. It is the same affectionate, warm heart as ever, you see, Captain Foxcroft! I do not believe that either the court or the city will ever change this dear child's generous, unassuming character! Whatever day will best suit you, Captain Foxcroft, I shall be excessively happy to receive you."

"Well, then, let's say Monday next, at half-past five, perhaps that means six, you know; but it's as well to say half-past five, to make you punctual," said Mr. O'Donagough.

The day and the hour were each welcomed by a bow of grateful acquiescence from the invited guest; who, after receiving one finger from Mr. O'Donagough, two from his lady, and a whole hand, accompanied by a broad grin, from Patty, departed, to meditate on the unexpected and rather puzzling grandeur of his friend and creditor, and to make up his mind as to the smallest sum for which he should agree to bind himself to Miss Matilda Perkins for life.

Hardly had the house-door closed upon him, than Patty, who, according to custom, had flown to the window that she might watch his progress down the street, turned sharply round,

and setting her arms a-kimbo, said, resolutely, "Now then, I shall set off for Brompton."

Mr. O'Donagough laughed, and drawing her upon his knee as he sat loungingly in an arm-chair near her, said,—

"Well done Patty! I like you for that, girl. I have a notion that you will not be carrying coals to Newcastle. You are a good-hearted girl, that I will say, and ready to do as you would be done by. And talking of that, Patty, I want you to tell me just exactly everything that Sir Henry Seymour did and said the day he came after you to Brompton. They tell me at his club that he is gone out of town, and that's all very well, as far as it goes, for of course he may have his engagements like any other man, particularly as nobody of his sort of style and fashion ever does show themselves in town till after Christmas, yet still I can't help wondering a little that we don't hear from him."

Patty grew exceedingly red during this speech, and having effectually struggled herself off her father's knee, bounced to the end of the room, and seizing the handle of the lock that she might open the door and escape, turned about and said—"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you ought, to ask a girl such questions. It will be pretty times for the young ones, if they are to repeat to the old ones, all that they say to one another!"

"Fair and softly, my beauty, if you please," said her father. "Walk back again, Miss Patty, or you may chance to be sorry you didn't."

The look and tone were of the kind that insured obedience, and the pouting Patty returned three steps into the room.

"Nearer, miss, if you please, nearer," said the angry parent. Patty made three more steps towards him, and then, apparently to save trouble, he rolled himself forward by the aid of the excellent castors of his arm-chair, till he was pretty nearly face to face with her.

"Now then, Miss Patty O'Donagough, let us understand each other. When I see fit, like a kind and affectionate father as I am, to ask you a question of importance about a gentleman that you assure me is in love with you, I don't choose to be told that I ought to be ashamed of myself. I believe your mamma will inform you, if you will ask her, that I am not much given to trouble myself about women's gossipings, and that few ladies have been less troubled by the curiosity of a husband than herself. But in this business of Sir Henry Seymour there is a good deal more to be considered, I promise you, than merely your fancy in the choice of a sweetheart. He is, as I have ascertained, a man of immense fortune, and great consequence. I made his acquaintance on board ship, as well as you, Miss Patty, and I have renewed it too, under circumstances which render it extremely likely that he may be useful to me in one

way or another. If he is really and truly your lover, and means to marry you, I am too good a father, notwithstanding all your impertinence, to think of anything whatever but your advantage, and all other use that I might make of him should be put aside and forgotten; but I want to know a little how the affair really stands between you. I certainly think that there was something very particular in his running after you to Brompton in that eager style, when, as I know well enough, he would have been exceedingly glad to have kept away from us altogether. This, as well as the manner in which I found you together, does make it really seem likely that those saucy eyes of yours have turned his head, and left him no choice but to make you my Lady Seymour. Now then, I have explained myself, and without being at all ashamed about the matter, as it seems to me, I may just take the liberty of asking the long and the short of what passed between you. Speak up, Patty! don't be afraid. There's nobody going to scold you for having a sweetheart. What was it the young man said to you? Did he out and out ask you to be his wife?

"Well, then, you may kill me, if you will," replied Patty, blubbering, "but I won't be bullied, that's what I won't, into telling tales of my own true love."

"The deuce take the girl!" replied the angry father. "She is a fool after all, I'll be hanged if she isn't, though I fancied her so monstrously clever. I shall go out, Mrs. O'D., and leave her to you; only remember that I expect to be told whether the young fellow has really promised to marry her or not. I know that he thinks her a good piece older than she really is—but I saw no harm in that, and didn't contradict him. And in short, if he has a fancy for having such a silly girl as you for a wife, I don't mean to baulk him—that's all. So now fall to, and have a good talk together, and let me know what comes of it, when I come home."

As a matter of course, the first part of the *tête-à-tête* between the mother and daughter was occupied by abusing their *mankind*. Both ladies were equally ready to declare that he was a brute, and a tyrant, and there never was such a plague; but this portion of the conference having at length been brought to a satisfactory close, Mrs. O'Donagough coaxingly led the discourse to the subject which she had been commanded to discuss with her daughter, and certainly managed it with some skill, inasmuch as it ended without a quarrel, for which, it must be confessed, the young lady held herself prepared.

"It is quite nonsense, Patty," she said, "to attempt talking with men about these sort of things; but to a mother, you know, it is different. A woman never forgets her youth, whatever a man does, and you need not be afraid to tell me any of the little things that have happened between you and Jack—

Sir Henry Seymour, I mean. Of course, you are almost too young as yet for anything very serious to have passed, but I don't doubt that you know pretty well what he is about—don't you, my dear?"

"I am sure I don't know what *you* are about, nor what you mean, either of you, tormenting me so. I dare say the real reason Jack does not come to see me is, that he saw that morning when papa walked with him, what a horrid sort of plague he was," replied Patty.

"Likely enough, my dear! But don't fret your dear heart about that, Patty. He'll come again, never fear. When a man is really in love, he is not so easily cured, I can tell you. I could give you proof of that if I choose it. But I'd rather talk of your own beautiful self, dearest. How did he look when he gave you that lock of his hair, darling?"

"Lord, mamma! As if I should be likely to stare him in the face all the time! I have got the lock of hair, and that's enough for you to know, of all conscience," replied Patty, again growing very red.

"I wonder how it happened that he left your beautiful ringlet behind him?" resumed Mrs. O'Donagough.

"Lord! what wonderments you do make about nothing, mamma! I should like to know how any one broken in upon, and tormented as he was, could know or remember anything he did or said?"

"That's very true indeed, Patty; and when he took that lock of hair at first, I suppose he gave you to understand that he loved you dearly, and that it was for that reason he asked for it, didn't he?"

"Well! I never did hear the like of you and papa!" exclaimed Patty, indignantly; "I should like to know what it is you do expect me to tell you? If you will promise not to plague me any more, I will tell you one thing, and if that won't satisfy you, I am sure I don't know what will—Jack kissed me, then! downright kissed me. What d'ye say to that? I'm sure I don't know what you *would* have."

"Very well, Patty, don't agitate yourself, my dear, to talk any more about it! I do think his kissing you does say a great deal. Such a very well-behaved young man as he always seemed to be, would never have thought of such a thing, I am quite sure, if it had not been by way of a declaration," said Mrs. O'Donagough, very gravely, and with every appearance of being extremely well satisfied. "Now go, my dear girl!" she added. "Go and get ready for your walk to Brompton. It will be a pleasure, won't it, Patty, to tell dear, good Matilda that she is to meet her old favourite, Foxcroft? But, poor thing! I doubt very much, Patty, if he will ever think of her seriously. She is so *very* thin!"

"Matilda won't die an old maid; she's too good for that, I'm sure," returned Patty, with all the ardour of friendship.

"Well, my dear, we shall see, said Mrs. O'Donagough, looking very intelligent. "But go now and get ready. The page shall walk after you, and that will be very nice, won't it? I am sure I wish you were to happen to meet Sir Henry! He has never seen you in proper style yet."

## CHAPTER XXV.

PATTY and her page reached Belle Vue Terrace in safety, but without meeting Sir Henry, who, to say truth, was stretching his leave of absence to the very utmost, to put off as long as possible the chance of any such rencontre. But fortunately Patty, notwithstanding her early submission to the tender passion, had nothing of the green and yellow nature in her disposition, and reached the abode of her friend with a colour as fresh as a rose, and in the highest spirits possible.

"Good morning, Miss Matilda! good morning, Miss Louisa," she began. "I should just like to know, Matilda, how much you would choose to give for the very best news that ever you heard in all your born days? Would you give me your watch?"

"What *do* you mean, Patty?" demanded her friend with considerable agitation.

"Now, can't you guess what I mean? Tell me, honestly, what you should call the best news you ever heard in your life? Never mind Louisa. Speak out."

"Good gracious, Patty, how you do torture me! Cruel, cruel girl! As if you did not know well enough without my telling you! For Heaven's sake, let me know at once! Have you heard that Foxcroft is expected in town?"

"Upon my honour and life I never heard any such thing, Matilda," replied Patty, very demurely.

Not all the full-blown, fresh remembrances of the beautiful drawing-rooms in Curzon-street could restrain the indignation of Miss Matilda Perkins on hearing these chilling words. "I wish to heaven you wouldn't come here, Miss O'Donagough, tormenting us to death with your absurd nonsense. I really think you are old enough to know better," she exclaimed.

"And I," returned Patty, laughing, "should have thought you not only old enough, but a great deal *too* old to quarrel with your best friend in such a hurry, just because she wanted to have a bit of a joke."

"Oh dear me! my dear Miss Patty! don't think for a moment that poor Matilda wants to quarrel with you. I am sure there is nothing further from her thoughts, for she loves the very ground you walk on. Only you know, my dear, that her

poor head is for ever running upon the name she mentioned, and therefore you must please to excuse her," said Miss Louisa.

"I'll excuse her fast enough," replied Patty, "if she won't be such a fool, and look so grumpy. Come, Matilda! cheer up. It is as true as the gospel that I did not hear Foxcroft was expected, but I never said that he wasn't come."

"Come!" screamed Matilda, in the shrillest voice that ever issued from the breast of a lady in love; "come! Patty? Surely it is impossible! Such happiness is a great deal too much to bear!"

"Is it?" said Patty, nodding her head. "Then, mercy upon us, Miss Louisa, what will become of her when she hears that the gentleman is coming to dine with us on Monday, and that I am come with the page walking all the way after me, as grand as possible, to invite you both to come and meet him? What do you think of that, Miss Matilda?"

"What do I think of it? Oh! my adored Patty! My heart feels too large for my bosom. Can you forgive me? Darling, dearest girl! Think what my feelings must be at this moment! May I believe your words, my dearest, dearest friend? May I trust my ears? Foxcroft in town, and I invited to meet him. Oh Foxcroft! Foxcroft!"

Here poor Miss Matilda's emotions perfectly overpowered her, and she threw herself on the sofa at full length, with a sort of kicking movement in her feet that really looked quite convulsive.

"Poor, dear girl!" exclaimed her sister, opening a cupboard, and taking out a small bottle of hartshorn; "it is too much for her. Smell this, my dear; let me rub your poor temples with it!" And suiting the action to the word, she drew the cork from the little phial, and receiving the pungent fluid upon her fingers began to apply it with much eagerness and much friction to the temples of her recumbent sister. The remedy was effectual. Starting from the sofa, and standing, with more strength than the frightened Louisa had given her credit for, upon her feet, she exclaimed rather hastily—

"Good gracious, Louisa; what are you doing to me? I shall have red patches all over my face, and my eyes will be swelled out of my head. For God's sake, take that beastly stuff away; I hate it?"

"You had better not send it away yet, Matilda," said Patty. "For if you begin kicking and sprawling at such a rate just because you heard that you were going to dine with the gentleman, what on earth will become of you when I go on, and describe all the looks, and the sighs, and the hints, and the blinks I got when I began talking of you?"

"Did you, indeed, my dear?" cried Louisa, with a mixture of astonishment and pleasure; "think of that, Matilda! Oh! my dear child! what a blessing it will be if it all comes right at last."

"It will, it will come right!" exclaimed Matilda, in a sort

of ecstasy. "I know he loves me!—I saw it in every dear working feature on that last heart-breaking day when we walked together on the pier. The rain came down in torrents, the wind blew, the sea dashed over us. I never shall forget his countenance. I am certain that every drop which reached his skin—and I know he was wet through—I am certain that every drop was an agony to him, because of me."

Here a pocket handkerchief, which might, perhaps, have wiped away tears produced by far less delightful feelings, was drawn from its retreat under the sofa-cushion, and pressed to the gentle lady's eyes.

"Oh dear! oh dear! don't cry so, Matilda," said her affectionate sister, looking very much disposed to weep for company—"I am sure it is enough to break one's heart to see how she does suffer about these little love-affairs! But suppose this was to end in marriage after all, Matilda! Think of that, my dear! Upon my word and honour, Miss O'Donagough, I think there seems more chance this time, from what you say, than ever I remember; and I ought to be some judge, we have had so many little things of the kind."

"Oh! oh!—You say WE, do you, Miss Louisa?" replied Patty, looking very knowing. "What, you have had your share, too, have you?"

"Oh dear, no!—Not me, Miss Patty. I never had anything of the sort happen to me in my life. I said WE, because you know, I am always so much interested about everything that happens to Matilda. Oh no! thank God! I never had any troubles of that kind myself; but, to be sure, I have suffered terribly at times, about Matilda. Disappointments are such sad things, you know, my dear—and gentlemen, I must say, do often behave very ill."

"Well, I'll be hanged if I think Foxcroft means to behave ill; but time will show!" replied Patty. "And now," she added in a whisper, "I want you to come here, Matilda, up to this window, that I may talk to you a little about myself. Do you know that both papa and mamma have been at me to-day like two tigers, because they don't think Jack makes love to me fast enough. If he's out of London, he can't be in it, that's all I say, any more than he could be aboard the ship when he was gone away from it—and yet, you know as well as I do, for I'm sure I've told you so fifty times, that he kissed me at the very last moment, and I found him true-hearted again, didn't I, when we met? and now, he kissed me again, you know, and so haven't I every reason to expect he'll come back true-hearted again?"

"Unquestionably you have, my dearest girl!" replied her friend; "it is nonsense to doubt it. But old people, I mean even elderly people, are always suspicious. I'm sure, there's my poor, dear sister there, who is twenty years older in her

thoughts and ways than she ought to be at her age, I am quite positively sure that she has stopped very advantageous marriages for me, over and over again; only because she never thought things went on fast enough, and was for ever suspecting that people meant nothing, when I happened to know that they meant a good deal. But, thanks to you, my darling Patty, I think we shall manage better this time. Dearest Foxcroft! How my heart seems to spring towards him! Did he look well, Patty?—Was he as tall and elegant as ever?"

"Why, as to that, you know, Matilda, I never did see any great beauty in him. But that's your affair, not mine, and lucky it is that tastes differ. As for tallness, indeed, he is just as tall as ever—but I think his nose looked monstrous large."

"Oh, Patty!—Love is love! There's no accounting for it in any other way—but I give you my honour, that I think Foxcroft one of the very handsomest men I ever saw."

"Well, my dear, so much the better. And I dare say he thinks you one of the very handsomest women. But now I must go, or else mamma will say that I shan't come again, as she did last time. Not that it much signifies to be sure, for here I am, you see."

"Stop one moment, Patty!" replied her friend; "you must positively tell me what I shall wear on Monday. Do you think I look best with my hair in bands, or in ringlets?"

"I don't think it makes much difference, Matilda. But, perhaps, bands will be best, because your hair is rather thin, you know—and mine's so monstrous thick, that it will make it look worse."

"It's very easy to fill it up with a few flowers, you know—I should not like to have such a mop as yours, my dear—unless, indeed, it curled as beautifully as yours does. But, of course, Patty, everybody knows that you have got the very finest hair in the world," said Miss Matilda, luckily correcting herself. After this *amende*, the friends parted as tenderly as they met, and were in an excellent frame of mind on the following Monday for showing off to advantage the graces of the female character, when warmed by the gentle influence of friendship, for they did not fail to caress each other at every convenient opportunity.

This eventful Monday proved a day of joy to more female hearts than one; for on the morning of it, Mr. O'Donagough once more called at Sir Henry Seymour's club to inquire for him, and, with better fortune than before, met him at the door of it. The pleasure which this meeting occasioned to the elder gentleman was not altogether attributable to fatherly affection, for he felt some tolerably strong misgivings as to the correctness of the interpretation put by his young daughter upon the gentleman's feelings towards her. But this caused but little difference in the earnestness of his wish to cultivate the young

baronet's acquaintance. To have caught such a husband for his daughter, would, beyond all doubt, have been very agreeable; but, as he wisely remembered, Patty had lost no time yet, and the young and independent Sir Henry playing whist with him, was an image very nearly, if not quite, as agreeable to his imagination, as that of his making love to his daughter. Besides, it was evident that his endeavouring to obtain the former, was far from being likely to impede the latter scheme, and he, therefore, put forth his best-got-up, and most beguiling style of salutation, and after a few friendly words, expressive of long-felt kindness, but cautiously free from any allusion to their nautical acquaintance, he invited him in a very gentleman-like off-hand style to come and dine with him.

Mr. O'Donagough perceived that the young man hesitated, and very skilfully changing the subject, instead of pressing for an answer, began talking of General Hubert and his family, deploring the heavy loss produced by their absence, and joyously anticipating their return. Having expatiated very eloquently upon this theme for about five minutes, he resumed the former one, saying, carelessly, "Well, you'll dine with us then, my dear Sir Henry? By the way, do you ever play a rubber? It seems quite the fashion among the young men now-a-days, and if you ever do such a thing, I'll promise you one to-night."

Now Sir Henry Seymour really did know how to play a rubber very well for so young a man, and moreover was very fond of it, though without any propensity whatever for gambling; yet too indifferent about money to be very scrupulous as to the stakes. It was not, however, this love of whist which made Mr. O'Donagough's invitation appear incalculably less disagreeable after he had heard of the rubber, than before, for he remembered in a moment that when a man is playing whist, he can hardly be suspected of making love, and that if poor Patty could be taught to let him behave himself discreetly, it would be exceedingly desirable to keep on such friendly terms with Mr. O'Donagough as should render it an act of treachery were he to betray either to the family of General Hubert, or to his guardian, Sir Edward Stephenson, the secret which he had confided to him. Under this impression, he now readily accepted the invitation, not failing to intimate as he did so, that he was a decided whist-player whenever he found a card-table ready to admit him.

Patty could hardly have been more delighted had the young man addressed her with, "Will you marry me?" than was her papa on hearing this declaration; but much too good a tactician to permit the feeling to be perceptible, he nodded an easy, *sans souciante* "good day," adding "at six o'clock then," and departed.

Mr. O'Donagough's next care was to secure a *proper fourth*, and in this he succeeded to his entire satisfaction, unearthing one of those dry-looking, adust, Roman-nosed individuals, who

by dint of originally procuring well-made garments, and then preserving them inviolably clean, are often declared to be very gentleman-like-looking men by those who have not the faculty of interpreting the hieroglyphics of the mind, as traced on the countenance. What Mr. Armondyle's fortune or profession might be, it was no particular person's business to inquire; and the question, if asked, must have remained unanswered, as nobody knew anything at all about it. The only information which he ever volunteered concerning himself was, that he was a bachelor, liked a sober rubber now and then, and was pleased to be invited to dinner where there were woodcocks. He belonged to most of the fashionable unprofessional clubs, but was never known to take any bodily refreshment at any of them. He wore goloshes and a very large cloak in bad weather, together with a substantial silk umbrella, having his name engraven on it; but nobody ever saw him use any conveyance (at his own expense, at least) except his own legs, yet somehow or other, nobody ever saw him either wet or splashed, or the precise nicety of his dress and person in any way deranged.

No human being ever heard him say a silly thing; it is true he did not talk much, carefully avoiding all subjects upon which men divide themselves into parties, so that his opinions were, for the most part, as unknown as his birth, parentage, education, and means of living. Even the yawning gulf which divides the conservative from the destructive, seemed a broad highway for him, for though nobody ever dreamed of accusing him of a change in principle or opinion, each party fancied he belonged to them in turn; and as neither could give any better reason for thinking so, than their own arbitrary interpretation of a quiet smile, or a gentle movement of the hand, each were at liberty to believe so still. One or two very old acquaintances, indeed, who fancied that they knew him better, have been heard to declare that they did not believe Mr. Armondyle would draw off his right glove to prevent a revolution, or his left to insure it. He knew mankind well enough, they said, to be very sure that, let what would happen, there would always be, somewhere or other, a game at something or other, to amuse idle men who had nothing particular to do; and with this assurance he would be well contented to go on shuffling and cutting to his dying day, without troubling himself to ascertain who was the better player, and who the worse, in the great game of politics in which he had never been invited to take a hand. It was sometimes gossiped in the clubs that Armondyle had lost immensely, or that Armondyle had won immensely; but neither the one report nor the other appeared to have the slightest effect on his *manière d'être*. He was ever the same neat, placid, polite person, whom nothing had occurred to disarrange, and whom it would be extremely difficult to discompose.

This gentleman made the dinner-party at Mr. O'Donagough's amount to eight; and as of these four were gentlemen and four ladies, Miss Louisa Perkins was led to observe that she had never seen any dinner-table so perfectly well arranged.

Of the entertainment it is unnecessary to speak at large; Mrs. O'Donagough had done her very best. Mr. Wright furnished the wines, which Mr. Foxcroft took upon himself to declare were excellent, and yet the gentleman repaired to the drawing-room the very moment Mrs. O'Donagough sent to say that the coffee was ready; a good old custom which Mr. O'Donagough declared it was his intention invariably to observe, unless some very young men happened to dine with him, and then he should certainly relax a little, he said, as it was never fair to "come the old codger over boys, and if they liked to be a little tipsy, he should always let them be so."

Sir Henry Seymour, however, did not appear to be classed under this category. He produced no alteration in the ordinary arrangement, and if it was even intended, by way of experiment, that he too should get a little tipsy before the card-playing began, this first visit was not considerd as a fitting time for it.

Though Patty was seated at table next to her "darling Jack," she was the one to whom the entertainment seemed the longest and the least agreeable; for the young man, though good-humoured, and even kind in his manner of addressing her, made no nearer approximation to love-making in his manner than if she had been sixty, and he fourscore. Her father perceived this, as well as herself, and it was immediately determined in the little committee on ways and means which sat for ever in his brain, that the young man should pay for the obduracy of his heart at the card-table. Not indeed on the present occasion; that would be contrary to all the rules and regulations made and provided in such cases; but steadfastly purposed was Mr. O'Donagough that if it should finally be proved that Sir Henry Seymour was *not* in love with his daughter, he should pay sharp damages for his indifference. Miss Louisa Perkins, untroubled by any passion, tender or otherwise, smiled, and ate, and smiled again. Mr. Armondyle endeavoured to make himself comfortable, which was indeed now, as at every other moment of his existence, his primary object; while Mrs. O'Donagough, who had conceived a sort of mystical idea that he was a person of consequence, poured out civilities upon him with a copious profusion which no *sang froid* less perfect than that of Mr. Armondyle could have stood unmoved—his most animated reply, however, was but a very slight inclination of the head. But, as of course might have been anticipated, the most animated group in the party consisted of Miss Matilda Perkins, Mr. Foxcroft, and the blushing troop of little loves and graces which were playing between them.

It was, in truth, a labour of love, the toilet of Miss Matilda, on that auspicious day! and equally captious and curious were it to inquire with a critical spirit either into the time consumed, or the effect produced by it. Suffice it to say, that her sister, in the short moment that was left for review before stepping into their hackney-coach, pronounced that she looked "very nice, indeed."

The result was all that the gentle Matilda's heart required; for, from the manner, and indeed, from the words of Mr. Foxcroft, it appeared incontestable that he thought she looked very nice too. Obedient to the hint of his patron, this gentleman made the very best use of every moment that preceded his being called, *bon gré, mal gré*, to take his place at the card table. Never, to be sure, did the most exemplary saint invoke maledictions on the fifty-two offending elements which combine to form the hateful abomination called a pack of cards, with more heartfelt zeal than did the dejected Matilda, as she sat forsaken and forlorn on a couch which commanded the fullest possible view of the form and countenance she loved! Poor lady! Surely no female heart under similar circumstances can fail to feel for her. More moving accidents may assuredly be found to employ the historian's pen,—sorrows, which on the face of them bear marks of deeper tragedy, may be recounted, and a reader's sympathy be claimed for sufferings more fatal—but for pure, perfect, unmitigated vexation of spirit, it could hardly be surpassed. A lover (within a quarter of an inch a declared lover) to be sitting in the same room with a young lady of thirty-six, and yet absolutely precluded from the possibility of uttering a single word to her! Even the pleasure of looking unremittingly in his face was not long allowed her, for Mr. O'Donagough, who naturally felt that the payment of his dinner was not to be risked by the presence of any ladies, old, young, or middle-aged, no sooner, by the course of cutting, lost Mr. Armondyle as a partner, than he unceremoniously requested the female part of the company to establish themselves in the other drawing-room; a piece of tyranny against which there was no appeal, but which made the four ladies rehearse in chorus that well-known sentiment of the fair, namely, "that there is no spectacle which the eye can rest upon, throughout the whole surface of the globe called earth, one-thousandth part so detestable as seeing the only four men in company sit down to whist."

The banished ladies (poor things!) naturally fell into two *têtes-à-tête*; in one of which all the minuter circumstances of Mrs. O'Donagough's present and approaching greatness were voluminously rehearsed to Miss Louisa's patient ear, while in the other, the younger ladies resumed the eclogue style, whispering rhapsodies respecting their beloved ones.

The party altogether, however, produced more of the results

wished for than generally happens where expectation has been so highly wrought—our poor Patty being, in fact, the only one disappointed essentially. Mr. O'Donagough had made up his mind to be equally well contented by Sir Henry Seymour's showing symptoms of love-making to his daughter, or money-losing to himself; and therefore, when he received six five-pound notes from the young baronet, together with a very cordial declaration of their having had an excellent rubber, he was not disappointed. His lady, too much occupied in "tasting her corners," as she called devouring the compounds of grease and garlick of which she had superintended the preparation, to have time for closely watching the proceedings of her daughter and Sir Henry felt perfectly satisfied, because she perceived he was talking to her; and this, together with the unwearied admiration of Miss Louisa at everything she saw, and everything she heard, sufficed to make her declare that it was "a most delightful dinner-party." Mr. Armondyle shared the winnings and the satisfaction of his host, being too well pleased at finding a new house to dine at, to permit his being critical at the dinner. Miss Louisa ate a great deal of apple-pie and custard, to which she was particularly attached; felt conscious that she was a prodigious favourite with the Amphitronia of the feast; and, better than all, began to entertain very serious hopes that her poor, dear, darling, tender-hearted Matilda would get a husband at last, after all the quantity of cruel disappointments which the perfidious false-heartedness of men had made her suffer. Sir Henry Seymour was quite as well pleased as any of them. For while the skilful O'Donagough contrived to make him constantly remember his own near connection with General Hubert, he set him completely at his ease respecting Patty, whom the wily father spoke of as a mere child, but one greatly petted and beloved by Mrs. Hubert and her daughter. At the moment when this affectionate partiality was dwelt upon, Sir Henry Seymour might have been seen, had anybody watched him, to fix his eyes upon the object of it with a very *naïve* expression of astonishment; but his own superlatively sweet temper succeeded, after a short struggle with his common sense, to convince him that it was all very natural, considering how very kind-hearted and affectionate the poor girl was, and how perfectly impossible it was for her to help being vulgar.

But general as the satisfaction of the company seemed to be —for even poor Patty convinced herself, before the end of the evening, that the difference in Jack was only because there were so many plaguy people watching them—general as was this satisfaction, it was nothing in comparison to the heartfelt happiness of the lady and gentleman for whom the entertainment had been originally planned. The feelings of Mr. Foxcroft, who, as he meditated on the "independence" dwelt on by Mr.

O'Donagough, became what might truly be termed *desperately* attached to the fair Matilda, were gratified in the greatest degree by perceiving that, however favourable the impression he had made upon her at Brighton, he had rather gained, than lost, by absence. For not even in the last trying moments when they had got wet through together on the Pier, had she shown such unequivocal marks of attachment, as when he trod upon her toe during that day's dinner. Of the state of Miss Matilda herself it would really be difficult to speak at length without deviating from the necessary sobriety of prose; so elevating, entrancing, soul-subduing were the emotions which took possession of her during the ineffable two hours of their juxta-position at the dinner-table.

Nothing, in short, could in all ways have succeeded better than this opening of the O'Donagoughs' London campaign; and the busy future rose before the eyes of all, decked in the very brightest colours, and pregnant with all sorts of agreeable possibilities.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

From the day of Mr. Foxcroft's first London conversation with Mr. O'Donagough, he had completely made up his mind as to the line of conduct he should pursue respecting Miss Matilda Perkins, and for some time he strictly adhered to it. Circumstances afterwards occurred which occasioned some trifling change; but the principle continued the same, and no one, judging of his conduct in an unprejudiced manner, could possibly accuse him of inconsistency. To take a step so important in life as that of marriage, without making himself properly acquainted with the lady he was to wed, or rather, with all the most important circumstances respecting her, would have been an imprudence of which Mr. Foxcroft, with all his indiscretions, would have been quite incapable. He purposed, however, in the first instance, to assure himself that his tender passion would, beyond all doubt, be acceptable to the lady, if future inquiries should authorise a declaration of it; and this fact would certainly have been satisfactorily established in the judgment of a shyer man than the ex-lieutenant, by the manner in which his experimental advances had been received.

Satisfied on this point, the next step in the process was to make a morning visit to the Miss Perkinses at their own dwelling, where, after having paid his compliments to them, without any apology for the liberty, and quite as a matter of course, he ventured to solicit a private audience of the elder sister, according to the mode in which it is usual to request leave to "speak a few words to a young lady's papa."

In this case, as in all others of the kind, the proposal for

such a conference announced the object of it to all the parties concerned. Even Miss Louisa, though not particularly rapid in her conclusions, experienced not the slightest doubt on the subject, and turning to her sister with great propriety of manner, she said, "Matilda, my dear, Captain Foxcroft wishes to speak to me upon a little business, I believe. Will you be so kind as just to go out of the room, my dear?"

In her very inmost heart, perhaps, Miss Matilda might have thought that, considering all that had already passed between them, this ceremony might have been dispensed with; but, too happy at this near approach of the fulfilment of all her wishes to quarrel with trifles, she turned one look of blushing languishment upon her lover, and left the room.

Mr. Foxcroft waited till the door was closed, and no longer; nothing in the slightest degree like embarrassment shook his nerves; he meant to make a straightforward proposal of marriage, subject to the possibility of being able to make up, by means of the lady's fortune and his own, such an income as he thought might be sufficient to secure the happiness of the woman he adored.

Miss Louisa, who (from a sort of "mother-wit," it must be presumed, for no circumstance of the kind had ever happened to her before) was quite aware of what was to follow, placed herself exactly in the middle of the sofa, looking a little more demure than usual, and making a movement with her right hand, which indicated that the gentleman was to place himself in a chair opposite, awaited his avowal with great decorum.

"My dear Miss Perkins," he began, with a sort of affectionate familiarity that seemed a foretaste of brotherly love, "my dear Miss Perkins, you must, I feel quite sure, have long ago discovered the state of my affections—you must be aware that I adore your sister."

"I certainly have thought, Captain Foxcroft," replied Miss Louisa, blushing a little at the fervour of his expressions, "I certainly have fancied that I saw something like a little partiality."

"Ah, my dear madam!" resumed the lover, "such measured language can but ill paint my feelings. But I will not pain your sensitive delicacy by dwelling too explicitly on the vehemence of a passion which our unfortunate sex has never been able to inspire in yourself. What I would first ask is, whether you think your charming sister, to whom I am too much a man of honour ever as yet to have confessed my love, has still a heart to bestow on me in return, and whether I may hope to receive in my behalf, the friendly approbation of yourself?"

"Oh, dear me! as to myself, Captain Foxcroft, I am sure there is nothing whatever I would not do or say to secure the happiness of my dear sister Matilda in the married state; for it

has, indeed, for a good many years, been my very greatest wish. Not, Captain Foxcroft, that this is to argue anything against her youngness, for I began to wish it when she was very young, because, I mean, of her great affectionateness of temper, and all that. And then, about her own heart, I think that, may be, if you were just to ask her yourself, it would perhaps be the best means of finding out what she thinks about you."

"So encouraged, my dear Miss Perkins, I may nerve my courage to the attempt. But, alas! before I can throw myself at her feet, the odious trammels of the world force from me another inquiry, hardly less necessary, such unhappily is the formation of society, than the first. Before I offer my hand in marriage to your sister, my dear Miss Louisa, it is absolutely necessary that I should ascertain from you whether our united incomes would amount to such a sum as I should deem sufficient for insuring the happiness of the woman I so fondly adore. My own resources are of the most fixed and unobjectionable kind; but I grieve to say that, ample as they are for my own expenditure, I cannot consider them sufficient to secure, without some trifling addition, such a degree of elegance in our establishment as I should wish my wife to enjoy. Will you tell me, then, with the same frankness with which I ask it, what is your sister's fortune?"

"I will tell you, sir, without any sort of deception whatever," replied Miss Louisa, not, however, without some little symptoms of hesitation in her voice and manner. "Of course it is right and proper that you should know everything; for who has a right to ask, if it isn't a gentleman who comes forward in such an honourable manner to offer to be her husband? But before I come to any particulars, I should just wish to say, that there is not a person in the world that would be happier upon quite a small little income than my sister Matilda. It stands to reason that I must know her if anybody can; and I am quite certain sure that if she had a good husband she would not care the least bit in the world about money, whether it was a little more or a little less."

"Charming, disinterested creature!" exclaimed Mr. Foxcroft, with great emotion. "But do you not perceive, my dear madam, that the less care her noble nature bestows upon such subjects, the more incumbent it is upon the husband she honours with her love to attend to them? Never should I forgive myself if I suffered the blind vehemence of passion to hurry me into a step that might bring privation and inconvenience upon her! No, Miss Louisa; on that point my mind is irrevocably made up. Nothing—not even the having to tear her lovely image from my bleeding heart—should induce me to commit an imprudence which, with my views upon the subject, must in my own conscience be classed as a crime. I beseech you, therefore,

to end this terrible suspense by telling me, with all the openness you have promised, the exact amount of your sister's fortune."

"I will, sir," said Miss Louisa, gravely, and with evident embarrassment; "but I am sorry to say that I fear it is not so much as you may think necessary. My sister Matilda has got very little fortune, sir."

A certain relaxation of the muscles about the eyes and mouth of Mr. Foxcroft might have shown a keen observer that the ardour of his feelings was relaxing too; but ere his words could make this manifest, the possibility occurred to him of his deeming a fortune *sufficient* under his present circumstances, which Miss Perkins might deem inadequate to the expectations of so dashing a personage as himself; and he therefore replied, not with a frown, but a smile, as he looked round upon the neat little apartment, "Perhaps, my dear lady, your ideas may be less moderate than mine. Your mode of living at Brighton, and your comfortable home here, prove that you must have each of you a sum of money at your disposal by no means to be considered as contemptible."

Miss Louisa shook her head. "That notion has deceived other gentlemen before you, Captain Foxcroft," said she; "but the fact is, that the chief part, by far, of what we live upon belongs to me. I had three thousand pounds left to me by an uncle of my mother's, a very little time after I was born, and so it went on, you know, growing more and more, till I came to be one-and-twenty; and soon after that our father and mother both died, leaving little or nothing behind them, because he was in an office, and that was what they lived upon. Matilda had all, however, which I am sure was very right and proper; but it did not come to above five hundred pounds altogether, and the interest of that is no very great matter. But my money, which is in the funds, as well as her little fortune, brings me in just two hundred a-year, and with that we contrive to live very comfortably, going to the sea every year, and me doing every thing I can, everywhere, to set off Matilda to advantage."

While Miss Louisa made this long speech, Mr. Foxcroft sat with his eyes steadily fixed upon her; his countenance during the time undergoing several alterations, of which, however, she was in no degree aware—for the kind-hearted lady greatly disliked the task she was thus obliged to perform—and instead of meeting the lover's varying eye, she kept her own steadily fixed upon the border of a night-cap that she was hemming with unbroken perseverance.

Just as she finished her oration Mr. Foxcroft rose, and, somewhat to her surprise, placed himself close beside her on the sofa. In fact, he sat *very* close beside her—for the sofa was a small one, and she had seated herself, as before stated, precisely in the middle of it; so, to make more room, she withdrew herself as

far as the dimensions of the seat would permit, expecting, with considerable anxiety, the answer which he had thus approached her to make.

Nor did she wait long for the sound of his voice, though its accents came not, in any way, like what she had either feared, or hoped.

"Oh! do not, admirable Louisa! do not draw yourself away from me, as if you feared that I could do you injury by my too presumptuous approach! Alas! as yet you have no reason to fear me. You know not, as yet, the wild tumult into which you have thrown my soul! Never, no never, did the tongue of woman or of angel recount a story so calculated to pierce to the very centre of a noble heart, and bind it in chains for ever!"

"Sir!" ejaculated the startled Miss Perkins, without, however, having the very slightest conception of what he meant.

"Ay—so it is I shall be treated by you! I already see, and feel it all," said Mr. Foxcroft, in a voice which seemed to indicate that his heart was nearly broken. "So it is I shall be treated! How can I expect it should be otherwise? How can I expect sympathy in feelings that can never be understood?"

"What DO you mean, sir?" cried Miss Louisa, squeezing herself up in the very furthest corner of the sofa, and looking at him very much, as if she thought he was going mad.

"Mean, Louisa,—what do I mean?" he replied, but in a tone so meek and gentle, as in a great degree to remove the personal terror of murder, 'under the influence of temporary excitement,' which from some recent readings of newspapers had not unnaturally occurred to her. "You ask me what I mean, my too, too charming friend! Alas! I have no words to answer you! For how can I make known—how, by any language used by man, can I hope to explain the vehement revulsion of feeling which has taken place in my very heart of hearts since first I entered this fatal room?"

"Fatal, Mr. Foxcroft? Fatal!" exclaimed poor Miss Louisa, all her fears returning at hearing a word which she understood perfectly, and knew to mean something about death. "Indeed, sir, I must beg that you will not speak to me in such a manner as that. I dare say you don't mean anything," she added, from a feeling of compunction, as she marked the exceedingly tame, not to say tender, expression of his eyes,—"but I am rather nervous, and you almost frightened me. However, I am quite sure you did not mean anything: so please to go on about Matilda, that I may let her know what you say."

"Not mean anything! Gracious heaven! what a fate is mine!" exclaimed the gentleman. "Oh Miss Perkins! cease, for pity's sake, cease to believe that in what I now say to you, I mean nothing. Be patient with me," he added, gently taking her hand. "Think not that I mean to offend, think not that I

mean to frighten you; but, oh! Louisa, there is that within my heart at this moment which *must* destroy me if I conceal it, and which may cause you to look unkindly on me were it to be revealed. I could not bear this, Louisa!" he continued, speaking rapidly, and as if to prevent her prematurely answering him; "I *could* not bear it. One frown, one angry look from you, would send me from you a raving maniac,—or stretch me at your feet a corpse!"

"Dear me, Mr. Foxcroft! I am afraid you are a very hasty man, and that isn't what makes the best husband. But after all, sir, it is for my sister Matilda to decide, and not me. If you'll be pleased to say at once whether your purpose is to go on with your offer now you have been told all particulars about her fortune, I will let her know it, and then my looks won't have anything more to do with it." In truth, the looks of Miss Louisa, as she uttered these words, were by no means so civil and so sweet as he had been used to see them; for she did not like the *passionate way* in which he talked, and could not help fearing that, determined as Matilda was to be married, it was not unlikely she might live to repent the not remaining single.

But Mr. Foxcroft either did not see, or did not heed her looks; for boldly passing his arm around her waist, he said, "I cannot leave you! I will not be banished thus harshly till at least I have made you know all that is passing in my heart. Let me tell you a story, sweet Louisa! and let me hear your own judgment on the facts I will lay before you. Will you listen to me, my gentle friend? Is this too much to ask?"

Miss Louisa was not used to being hugged, and she did not like it. She conceived it to be exceedingly coarse and ungenteel, even from a brother-in-law; but though very anxious to bring this puzzling interview to an end, she was so terrified at the idea that any rudeness on her part should send off Matilda's odd-tempered lover in a huff, that she very civilly said, "I will hear any story, Captain Foxcroft, that you will please to tell me; only you ought to recollect that my sister Matilda must be in great suspense all this time, and so I think you ought to make it as short as you can: and besides, sir, I will be much obliged if you will please to take your arm away, because it makes me sit very uncomfortable."

Mr. Foxcroft withdrew his arm, while with the other he made a flourish in the air that ended by slapping his forehead in a manner which inferred great mental suffering, and then changing his place to a chair, which he drew to a point exactly opposite to the lady, he thus addressed her.

"There was once a man, doubtless with many faults, but formed by nature with a heart the most tender and the most true that ever beat within a human breast. This man was thrown by fate into the society of two lovely, graceful, intel-

lectual women, whose manners, marked by that peculiar tone of delicacy which his soul most loved, had for him a degree of captivation which he found it impossible to resist. He was a military man, and so wedded to his profession, that he long struggled against every thought of any other marriage, knowing, from having watched the same effect on others, that where the sword is not the only bride, the steel-braced panoply of war, is apt to gall the wearer. However," continued the gentleman, with a deep sigh, "his fate was busy with him, and all his most steadfast purposes seemed melting into air. Of these two enchanting sisters, there was one—the eldest—" and here another sigh impeded, for a moment, the fluent utterance—"one—the eldest," he resumed, "who was formed in a mould which was the very model which nature had seemed to stamp on the imagination of this unhappy man as the pattern of all he was born to admire and to love. But he fancied he perceived a coldness towards him in her manner. He was not a presuming man; and this idea chilled all hope within him! He looked—he could have loved—but dared not—and turning for consolation to the softer-seeming younger sister, he met a degree of encouragement which led him to hope that if the ecstatic bliss of possessing her he adored was denied him, he might be soothed and lulled to peace and forgetfulness by one who in some degree resembled her. But woe to him who fancies he can play tricks with the mighty god of love, and juggle with him for felicity! Just at the very hour when the unhappy man had made up his mind to marry the younger sister, such a glorious record of the heavenly-minded virtues and angelic high-mindedness of the elder was disclosed to him, that all his idle efforts not to love her fell, like the withered leaves from the sapless trees of autumn, and left him defenceless to endure the storm of irresistible passion that rushed upon his heart. A few agonising moments of self-examination followed, but when these were over, the manly firmness of his mind returned. He felt that if from a mistaken sense of honour he should persevere, and become the husband of the younger sister, his rebellious heart would cause *her* misery, as well as his own; whereas if he could succeed in obtaining the elder, their days would flow in an endless circle of unceasing bliss, that might teach the very gods to envy!"

Here the orator paused, and gazed earnestly on the face of the lady he addressed, but not all his acuteness could avail to discover what she thought of him.

"Say, Louisa! speak!" he passionately resumed; "was this man wrong in acknowledging his unconquerable love, ere it was yet too late to save the charming younger sister from the dreadful fate of throwing herself away upon one who could not love her? Say, was he wrong?"

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"Upon my word, Mr. Foxcroft, I am no very good judge of such matters, because they are quite out of my way," replied Miss Louisa. "But it seems to me, sir, that it was a pity the gentleman did not know his own mind sooner."

"And who, think you, was this erring man?" replied Foxcroft; "who think you was the angelic woman who had this power over him? Oh! Louisa!" he added, throwing himself on his knees before her, determined, as it seemed, to stake all on this bold *throw*, "oh! Louisa! it is yourself! Speak to me, adored Louisa! Tell me my fate in one soul-stirring word—Will you be my wife?"

The lady rose from her seat, and extricating her hands by a sudden jerk from the grasp of her lover, she slipped her thin person round the corner of a table that seemed to fasten her in, and reaching the door, laid her hand upon the lock; but before she opened it, she deliberately turned round, and faced the still prostrate gentleman, saying in a very quiet voice, "No, indeed, sir, I will not." Then making her exit, she entered the little bedroom behind, and found strength in her very honest indignation to recount to the palpitating Matilda this terrible termination of her love-affair.

In what way Mr. Foxcroft got out of the house was never known; but it is presumed that he opened the front door for himself very quietly, as the maid, when summoned to run out for two pennyworth of hartshorn, deposed that she had neither seen nor heard anything of him.

It is so very easy to guess all that Miss Matilda felt, and most of what she said, on this melancholy occasion, that it is unnecessary to describe it. One observation, however, which she made at the interval of some days after the scene above described, being more peculiarly her own, shall be repeated. Feeling herself totally unable to face her gay and blooming friend in Curzon-street, the willow-wearing Matilda had confined herself entirely to the house for four days, saying little on the subject to her sister, with whom, for some reason or other, she did not appear to be well pleased, and appearing to find more consolation in darning a quantity of old stockings, than in anything else. On the fifth day Patty and her page set off upon a voyage of discovery, and despite the reluctance of the fair sufferer to enter upon the history of her disappointment, her young friend persevered in her affectionate inquiries till she had got at the fact that Mr. Foxcroft feared they should not be able to make up enough between them to live upon comfortably.

Of the transition of his affections to her sister, she said nothing, having extracted from Louisa, who felt a good deal ashamed of the whole affair, a willing promise never to mention it to anybody. Having listened to this valedictory piece of prudence, Patty indulged in some strong language expressive of

her indignation of what she called such "dirty false-heartedness," and declared that she was very sure there never had been such an abominable thing done before, since marriage was invented between Adam and Eve in Paradise. "But," she added, with much practical good sense, "there is no use in your breaking your heart, you know, because he is a rogue and a villain, and if I was you, Matilda, I'd make love before his very eyes, with the first man that was in the humour for it."

"And so I would, my dear," replied Matilda, roused by this agreeable project of revenge into a livelier frame of mind than she had enjoyed since her misfortune; "only it is so monstrous disagreeable to have the same thing happen again and again."

"I am sure that's nonsense, Matilda, for it isn't very likely that such a queer thing should happen twice to the same person. However, to make that safe, I would always take care that everybody should know exactly how much I had got—and then you know there can't be any mistake. And I'll tell you what, my dear, 'tis as clear as light that papa means to have lots of men coming of an evening just as he did at Brighton, you know, and we shall have capital fun again, if you'll only snap your fingers at Foxcroft, as I shall do at Sir Jack, if he does not choose to come round again, nasty, cold-hearted, ungrateful fellow! But you don't suppose I mean to put my finger in my eye as if there wasn't another man in the world? Not I, Matilda, take my word for it. But now I must go—for mamma has found out some old lord that she knows, and expects him to call to-day, so she insisted upon it that I should come back to be shown off. Cheer up, my dear, and I'll find plenty of beaux for you, never fear."

With this comforting assurance Patty departed, and the two sisters were left alone to meditate upon her words.

"Sweet, kind-hearted creature she is, to be sure!" said Miss Matilda, after a silence of some minutes; "it is quite impossible not to love her!—and I am quite sure she is right too, about me. She is an uncommonly sharp girl, for her age, and catches things quicker than anybody I ever saw. That about letting everybody know, was excessively clever of her. Don't you think it was, Louisa?"

"Letting everybody know about your only having five hundred pounds, Matilda? Why I am sure if the doing it would prevent any more such horrid adventures, I should think it *was* the best thing that could be done. Only, my dear, I don't think it would answer about your getting married, which I am afraid you have still got in your head. Don't you think, my dear, that perhaps the best thing would be to give it up altogether? I am sure it would save you a deal of trouble and vexation, Matilda."

Poor Miss Perkins was almost terrified when she perceived, by the heightened complexion of her sister, how very distasteful this proposed improvement of their plans was likely to be.

"I wish, Louisa, that you were not always forgetting the enormous difference in our ages," she replied, tartly. "It is all very well for you to talk of making up your mind against marriage, but you must please to recollect that it may not be quite so easy for me. When I find myself noticed like other young women, I should like to know how I am to help thinking about marriage? I am sure it is very shocking, and very wicked, *not* to be thinking about marriage when people are making downright love to one. What would you have me think about, I wonder?"

"Well, my dear, I dare say you know best," returned the unresisting Louisa. "And God knows that my first wish is that you should be made happy and contented, if I did but know how to bring it about."

"You *could* bring it about, Louisa, easy enough if you really wished it," replied the younger sister.

"Good gracious! how, Matilda?" returned the elder one. "I am sure I never in my life did anything to stop your getting married, whatever I might think about it in my own heart."

"I did not say you did," replied Matilda, in the sharp tone to which her quiet senior was a little too much accustomed. "But there is a great difference, you know, between not stopping a match, and doing something sisterly to help it on."

"But what *can* I do, Matilda? Nobody would marry you a bit the more for my telling them to do it."

"But there *is* a way, Louisa, that if you would put it in practice, would take me off your hands in no time."

"Is there? Then I wish you would tell me what it is, my dear. Not that I want to get you off my hands, Matilda; I am sure I love you very dearly indeed, but certainly it would make me a deal happier if I could see you easy in your mind," said the kind lady with something very like tears in her eyes.

"Can you have any doubt, Louisa, after all you have seen and heard, that if you were to make over to me half your fortune—only half, mind—I should find husbands enough ready to marry me?" said Matilda, in rather a bitter accent.

"Indeed, I am afraid you might find plenty, my dear."

"Afraid! What do you mean by afraid? Isn't that cruel, savagely cruel, when you know it is the first wish of my heart?"

"But surely, Matilda, it cannot be the first wish of your heart to have a husband that could be bought for £2,575 10s., which is just half what I stand for in the stocks."

"It is very easy, Louisa, to turn the most serious things into ridicule. And as to what I would, and what I would not do, I must certainly be old enough to decide for myself. I am the best judge of what is for my own happiness. It is no good now, to dispute that—I have made up my mind to ask you, Louisa, and I now do it in an honest, straightforward manner.

Will you let me tell Mrs. O'Donagough, who is truly a friend to both of us, and would take care to make proper use of the information, will you let me tell her, Louisa, that my fortune is rather more than three thousand pounds—because of my own five hundred, you know?"

"I don't believe, Matilda," replied Miss Perkins, very gently, "that I could prevent your telling Mrs. O'Donagough anything you liked. But as to the thing itself, it is certainly what I do not intend to do."

On receiving this definite answer, the indignant Matilda suddenly made a large roll of her rather untidy-looking work, and thrusting it under the sofa, left the room.

"Poor thing!" murmured Louisa, as she shut the door, which had been banged, but not closed. "Poor thing!—she shall have it all when I die. But God forbid I should spend £2,575 10s. to buy such a man as Captain Foxcroft for her, and she still so well-looking, as she says—I am sure it would be very wicked if I did."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

"No go, my dear fellow!—I must find out some other scheme," said Mr. Foxcroft, in a bravado sort of tone, as he entered with a swing into the sanctum of Mr. O'Donagough's library, "Matilda Perkins has absolutely nothing."

"Then how the devil do they contrive to live?" demanded Mr. O'Donagough, knitting his brows with an expression that was by no means conciliatory.

"The money all belongs to the old one," replied his friend.

"All! Then, Foxcroft, you may make just twice as good a thing of it as you hoped to do. Contrive to pick a quarrel with the youngest; turn about and fall in love with the eldest, and you will exactly find yourself master of all, instead of half. I presume you are not very particular as to which of the two ladies you get with it?"

"No, not I. But I am not quite such a fool as you seem to take me for, O'Donagough. I had wit enough to hit upon that scheme myself, and I tried it too, in pretty tolerable good style, I can tell you. But I might just as well make love to your iron coal-box there as to the old one. Egad, I never saw such a cold blooded old jade in the whole course of my life. She listened very quietly, but with just about as much sensibility as a post; and the real truth is, that women never *do* listen to love-making when they have got money, in the same way as when they have not."

"That is very likely, Mr. Foxcroft, and probably your own experience has suggested the observation; but I must beg leave to observe that it affords vastly little comfort to me, under my

extremely inconvenient disappointment. I should be sorry to press any gentleman uncivilly; but you must be aware, sir, that affairs of this kind are very peculiar as to their immediate consequences. My name has just been put down by Sir Henry Seymour at two of the first-rate clubs, and you must know that it will be impossible for me to permit our acquaintance to continue under circumstances, excuse me, Mr. Foxcroft, so very disgraceful."

This was listened to with a wonderful degree of gentleness and equanimity, not a shadow of anger appearing on the long-visaged countenance of the ex-lieutenant.

"True, O'Donagough, true as gospel!" he replied, "and if bleeding me could pay the money, upon my soul I'd hold out my arm for the operation. But what on earth can I do, my dear sir? I have never gone out of the gentlemanlike line yet, and I should be monstrous sorry to do it, because you know it is so devilish hard to get up again. But if there is nothing else for it, I suppose I must e'en submit, and get enrolled among some set of regular equalisers of property. God knows I would do anything rather than not settle my account with you."

"Well, sir, that is feeling and speaking exceedingly like a gentleman; and I beg to say in return that no man would be more unwilling than myself to harass a man of honour, under such circumstances. But the fact is, Foxcroft, and you know it very well, that if this transaction between us is not closed, and settled, you are, in point of fact, placed quite beyond my power to help you. I know, therefore, but of one mode by which I can prove how sincerely I still feel myself your friend, but this mode I cannot adopt without placing a degree of confidence in you which the length of our acquaintance, perhaps, hardly warrants. Professions at such a moment, we all know, come easily, and therefore if I consent to return the I O U which I hold, it must be done upon condition of your immediately giving me *proof* that you are ready to go all lengths to deserve it."

"Name your proofs, O'Donagough!" exclaimed Foxcroft, eagerly, and with the refreshed aspect of a man to whose parched and despairing looks the revivifying cup of hope is once more offered; "name your proofs, and if I shrink from them, proclaim what has passed in every gaming-house in London."

"Foxcroft!" replied Mr. O'Donagough, with a very unusual degree of solemnity, "I will speak to you with the most perfect sincerity. The truth is, that in order to carry out the purpose I have in view, I must trust *somebody*, and it is obvious, my good friend, that the most eligible person upon whom such confidence can be reposed, must be one whose reputation is in my power. This, to a man of your capacity and clear comprehension, is preface enough; and I shall therefore proceed at once to state what I shall require of you. The *proofs* to which

I have alluded, will be given on your part by the skill and the will with which I shall see you conduct yourself on the first occasion that they may be called for."

No hungry dog, waiting with watery mouth for the scraps expected to fall from his master's hand, ever fixed his eye upon that master with sharper eagerness than Mr. Foxcroft now did upon the face of Mr. O'Donagough.

"You may well look anxious to listen to me, my good fellow," resumed the master of the house, with a benignant smile, "for if I do not greatly miscalculate, a much finer career is at this moment about to open before you, than you can ever have hoped for, during the whole course of your existence. In my younger days, Foxcroft, I was once fortunate enough to pass a season in Paris under very favourable auspices. The wig which it suits me to wear now, my good fellow, may perhaps render it rather difficult for you to believe what a capital good-looking, dashing blade I was, some five-and-twenty years ago. This helped me very greatly. I had one exceedingly serviceable introduction, and the rest of my good fortune grew out of it. In short, I had the *entrée* to some of the best houses in Paris, by which, as I presume you will conjecture, I do not mean the mansions either of the richest, the highest-born, or the most illustrious, in any of the ordinary and old-fashioned senses of the word. But in its way, the society I was thrown amongst was perfect, and I do not believe that even yet there are many houses in London which receive exactly on the same principle as those of which I speak in Paris. In the first place, high play is here almost entirely confined to the clubs; an exceedingly clumsy way of using an exceedingly good thing. Of the immense advantage and utility of these gambling clubs to society, of course nobody in their senses can doubt; nevertheless, there are many little peculiarities of play among many very fashionable and highly-distinguished men, which render the variety afforded by meeting quite young players in a private drawing-room extremely convenient and agreeable.

"Of such drawing-rooms, Foxcroft, there are abundance in Paris, and I am determined that there shall at last be one here. How it will answer of course remains to be proved; but in this, as in every other experiment, almost everything depends upon the style and manner in which it is made. One essential feature in the scheme, and one, as you will believe, never lost sight of in Paris, is the obtaining by some means or other such a sprinkling of *really* good company, according to common vulgar parlance I mean, as may act as a decoy, or rather as an authority for the presence of such tyros as are at once, perhaps, the most difficult to lay hold of, and the most valuable when caught. In this respect I am very peculiarly well situated, and, indeed, I question whether without this advantage I should

have ever ventured upon the scheme at all. My wife's connections are, as you know, of a class that renders the presence of any of them a guarantee for the perfect respectability and *bon ton* of the *salon* in which they are seen, and though General Hubert and his family are at this moment abroad, Frederic Stephenson, a much more manageable person, by the way, than the stiff-backed general, comes to town immediately after Christmas, and will, I feel no doubt, extend to me exactly the sort of protection I want, and that, too, without having the slightest consciousness that he is doing it. There is a certain nobleman, also, an old crony of my wife's, who is already in town, and has promised to visit her. I have inquired about him, and find he is the very man for us—sufficiently easy and liberal-minded to go wherever he can be amused, yet not at all permitting himself to drop out of good society. The two men you met here the other day at dinner, are, each of them in his respective way, highly valuable. Armondyle is one of the best and most gentlemanly players in London; and Seymour, as I am told, about the richest *quite* uncontrolled young man about town. Of course, if I get into the clubs, my list will rapidly increase; but you must be aware, my good friend, that let me get who I will here, nothing effectual, nothing *masterly*, can be done without a coadjutor. You understand me? Are you willing to become such?"

With the air of a hero about to pledge his untarnished faith to the maintenance of some noble enterprise, Mr. Foxcroft held out his hand, and solemnly received that of O'Donagough in its grasp. "Let me hold this station near you, my most valued friend," he said, "and never shall you repent the choice. You have probably perceived something in my manners, and in my character, which has led you to believe that I am not altogether unworthy of, or unfitted for, this situation; and without unseemly boasting, I may venture to say that you are not deceived. I am conscious that I may have many things against me, but, nevertheless, I am conscious also, that I possess both faculties and qualities which peculiarly fit me for the task. The outline of your scheme is distinctly clear before me; the filling up must, of course, depend both upon circumstances and your own individual inclinations. You have mentioned Sir Henry Seymour, for instance, and there can be no doubt in the world that he is quite a first-rate man to obtain as a frequenter of your *salon*. But, between friends, I should have thought that you had other projects for him. I have a great notion that your beautiful Patty has a fancy for him, and it would be a capital match, O'Donagough. However, that's your concern, not mine. I can have no objection to your throwing open the preserve, as it were, and letting us share and share alike, if you think *that* a more profitable scheme than the other."

"Why, I am not sure that I should, Foxcroft, if that other were fairly in my hands to take or to leave; but I doubt it. I know perfectly well that the young fellow has been devilish sweet upon her, and that the poor little soul is over head and ears in love with him; but I strongly suspect that he never thought seriously about her, and that he has only been amusing himself by turning her young head for pure fun—a suspicion, as you will readily believe, not very likely to make me spare him at the board of green cloth. I have a hold upon him too, upon which it is not necessary to enter now, that I think will keep him effectually within my reach, and, as he will serve me as a decoy duck, and a pigeon, I mean, remember, in *all* ways to cultivate his acquaintance, and stand well in his eyes."

"It shall not be by fault of mine if you do not," replied the faithful associate; and presently added, with the air of one who was making a very shrewd remark, "By the way, O'Donagough, that daughter of yours is a charming creature, and will count for something, you may depend upon it, among the attractions of your drawing-room."

"That is exactly what I have been thinking myself, Foxcroft; and to say the truth, I am not altogether sorry that there is no chance of her being caught up by this Sir Henry immediately. She is very handsome—I never saw finer eyes in my life; and when she is a little more used to company, she will tell more in a drawing-room than she does now. I own that I wish her mother was not quite so large,—she would be an exceedingly fine woman still, if it were not for that. Just such a looking woman as she was, when I first knew her, is the very best partner a man can have in such a concern as we have been speaking of. She has a great deal of talent, however, and I have no doubt will do exceedingly well."

"There can, indeed, be no doubt of that," replied Mr. Foxcroft impressively; "and now, my dear friend," he continued, "let us come to particulars. Let me understand exactly your projects, your expectations, your arrangements. It is impossible to doubt for a moment your liberality; but in a business of this kind it is as absolutely necessary that everything should be openly expressed between the associates, as that nothing should be openly expressed beyond them. Here is pen and ink. Give me leave to set down from your own lips, precisely the terms on which you propose that we should carry on together this admirably-imagined scheme. Yet, imagine not from the phrase, *carry on together*, that I have any notion of a perfect equality as to the division of what may result from it; nothing like it, I assure you. I am perfectly aware that your stake is greater, not to mention that the merit, all the merit, of originating the plan is your own. I say this, that you may understand at once the fair and gentlemanly feeling with which I am

desirous to proceed. And now, my dear O'Donagough, for particulars."

* * * * *

While this conversation was going on in the library, a scene almost equally interesting, was passing in the drawing-room. Mr. O'Donagough having learnt, by some means or other, that his lady's former admirer, and what was more important as a trait of character, the magnificent donor of her shell necklace, was in town, proposed, with what she sensibly felt to be a very generous freedom from all narrow-minded jealousy, to take some active measures towards the renewal of an acquaintance from which, as she freely confessed, she had derived much pleasure.

"But not for the world, my dear Donny," she said, on his proposing this, "not for the world would I wish Lord Mucklebury to visit here, if his doing so would give you uneasiness. I will not deny, I never have denied, that at the time we parted, I regretted the unfortunate entanglement abroad, which obliged him to leave me. But subsequent events have, of course, reconciled me to this early disappointment, and I feel that I could see him now and introduce him to my husband and my child, without experiencing any emotion whatever, beyond what the purest friendship may authorise."

"Very well, then, my dear," Mr. O'Donagough had replied, "that being the case, you shall sit down and write a note to him immediately, just saying, you know, that you should like to return your personal thanks for his having so kindly thought of you in the city of the Cæsars, or something of that kind, which shall look light and playful;—you understand?"

"Oh! perfectly!" she replied. And this light and playful billet produced an answer from the still laughter-loving nobleman, which perfectly satisfied Mr. O'Donagough, and caused a very animating and youthful sort of flutter to pervade the entire frame of his sensitive wife.

It was exactly at the time that Mr. O'Donagough was the most earnestly engaged with Mr. Foxcroft in the conversation that has been given above, that Lord Mucklebury made his *entrée* into the drawing-room of his umquhile Barnaby. His lordship's note in promising this visit, had said, "Lord Mucklebury will take an early opportunity," and accordingly Mrs. O'Donagough had sat in state in her fine drawing-room every morning since, from midday to the hour of dinner, attired with a degree of captivating elegance which it had cost her some hours of meditation to devise. Her great object was to look as nearly as possible like what she had been some eighteen years before, when his lordship had made her poor heart leap like a porpoise after a storm, by addressing her as "*Mia Barnabbia!*" In unfading ringlets, and unfadi[illegible]rouge, she had great confidence, and her eyes too, she thou[illegible]had stood the test of time

with almost unfading brightness. But she could not, poor lady! conceal from herself the disagreeable fact that of late years she had become what friends call *embonpoint*, and unfriends, corpulent. She felt, alas! that she was unwieldy; and that the majestic *charpente*, which had formerly assisted so *largely* (a villainous pun of Mr. O'Donagough's) in obtaining for her the epithet of "a prodigious fine woman," was become by the gradual increase of its fleshy clothing of a size by no means easy to dress gracefully. Of this she was, if not wholly, at least, in a great degree, conscious; and to neutralise the effects of this substantial impediment to beauty, she had for many days been occupied (but, unlike her general habit, silently occupied) on meditating the form and material of the dress in which she should for the first time re-appear before the eyes of Lord Mucklebury.

The reader need hardly be told at this stage of her history, that Mrs. O'Donagough's mind was one of no common order. If it had been, she would, beyond all question, have had recourse in this emergency to the ordinary and every-way vulgar operation of tight lacing. But Mrs. O'Donagough knew better. She knew perfectly well, that though it may be possible to transfer matter, it is beyond human power to annihilate it, and although under the circumstances she might have been tempted to exclaim,

Oh! that this too, too solid flesh would melt!

she never for a moment was guilty of the folly of hoping that she might be able to make away with it. With this right-minded conviction fully impressed upon her, she gave herself to the study of her toilet, not with the vain hope of lessening her circumference, but with the rational intention of rendering it as little conspicuous as possible. "The general outline," thought she, "must be indistinct. A sort of floating maze of drapery ought to envelop such a form as mine, in which the eye cannot justly determine where the natural material ends, and that of the dress begins—a sort of vapoury, misty, decoration should fall around the shoulders, from among which the still handsome face should appear, like that charming portrait that I made Donny stop to look at the other day, where a beautiful head seemed peeping at us through a cloud."

Inspired by this idea, the skilful lady set to work, and while Patty and the page were taking their daily exercise round and round the pavement of Berkeley Square, she contrived to fabricate a dress, the capes, sleeves, flounces, and furbelows of which seemed to wander, and fall, and undulate, and rise again, till, according to her ingenious intention, it would have been difficult for the most accurate eye to detect the points where the lady ended, and her dress began.

It was thus that she received Lord Mucklebury; and had

she not been already fully satisfied with the result of her own labours, and convinced that, however enormously large she might be, it was not at all likely that anybody would observe it, the sight of his lordship would at once have removed from her mind every feeling of alarm, lest HE, at least, should remark invidiously upon her increased bulk—for he had himself, like Father Philip, "prospered marvellously" since he had last presented his portly person before the admiring eyes of our heroine. It was, indeed, evident that he had taken leave of his own shoe-strings for ever, by reason of the intervening paunch, while his jocund cheeks spread widely, and unrestrainedly, over the cravat that formerly sustained them. But nevertheless, Mrs. O'Donagough thought him almost as charming as ever; and when, with both arms put forward to their utmost length, which just enabled the hands to reach beyond the "capon-lined" rotundity of his goodly person, he seized cordially upon each of hers, and, bending himself forward, contrived, notwithstanding all impediments, to salute her cheek, she was unconscious of any alteration, but for the better.

Let it not, however, be supposed for an instant that Mrs. O'Donagough's feelings were such as Mr. O'Donagough could have disapproved; nothing could be more cruelly unjust than such a suspicion. It was the noble nature, as well as the noble birth, of the amiable peer, which warmed her heart towards him, and which made her feel, more strongly than ever, the immense advantage of such talents and manners as her own, which had enabled her to secure for years, as she subsequently observed to her husband and daughter, the affectionate attachment of a nobleman, whose early feelings for her were of a kind which rarely produced such an after-growth of admiration and esteem.

"I rejoice, my dear madam," said the peer, "to see you looking so charmingly after your long absence—*Pel corpo di Bacco!*—I hope you have not forgotten your Italian?—*Pel corpo di Bacco!* you have not lost anything since we parted last. Nor have you gained too much, no, not an atom too much! You are charming, charming, ever! *sempre bellissima!*"

"This is, indeed, a most gratifying favour, my dear lord!" replied the fascinated and fascinating lady; "I cannot thank you enough for it! Oh! my lord! after an expatriation of so many years, it is inexpressibly soothing to a heart like mine, to find that those whom my judgment taught me most to value, and my taste to admire, ere I left my native land, are ready to receive me with a friendly greeting on my return to it."

"The very same! The very same as ever!" exclaimed Lord Mucklebury, in great delight. "If I were to live a thousand years, my dear Mrs. Barnaby, while I remembered anything, I should remember you!"

"Oh Lord Mucklebury! It would, indeed, be strange if feelings such as yours were not reciprocal! But, my kind friend, forgive me if I remind you that you must no longer call me Barnaby. Ah! my dear lord! the heart of a woman is destined from her birth to pant for an answering heart! To feelings like mine, the chill solitude of widowed loneliness was intolerable, and though it is denied to us to—to—forgive me! I know not where my foolish memory would lead me! Suffice it to say, my lord, that soon after my last hurried interview with your lordship, which, as you will remember, I sought for the purpose of giving you the little commission you so generously executed afterwards—soon after that, I discovered, even before I could understand how the thing could be, that I was adored by a man endowed with a thousand fine qualities. After a while—after a little struggle with myself to forget former feelings, I yielded to his wishes, and my name is now O'Donagough."

"By sun and moon I swear," exclaimed Lord Mucklebury, drawing forth a cambric handkerchief richly scented, and indulging the lower part of his face by its near neighbourhood, "by sun and moon I swear, that never, since I saw you last, have I met any human being that could equal you, most exquisite Mrs. O'Donagough! God forbid that your amiable husband should be jealous, madam! Ease my heart at once; is this likely to be the case?"

"Oh no, my lord!" replied Mrs. O'Donagough, with expressive emphasis, and a smile that seemed to say, "He knows my unconquerable virtue too well," "oh no! my lord, not the least jealous, and it will give me more satisfaction than I can easily express, if your lordship will allow me to have the honour of introducing him."

"Permit you? Adorable Mrs. O'Donagough, it will be like opening to me the gates of paradise. Upon the honour of a peer," continued Lord Mucklebury, laying his hand as near his heart as the circumjacent solidities would permit, "upon the honour of a peer, I protest to you that an *entrée* to your mansion is at this moment what I most greatly covet, and I shall be only too happy if Mr. O'Donagough will permit me to make his acquaintance. Perhaps, too, *Madonna delectissima!* you will suffer me, for the sake of our long friendship, to present my son to you? I do pledge you my word that he deserves the honour, for he inherits enough of his father's spirit to enjoy it."

"My dearest lord! your condescending kindness overpowers me! I, too, have a young creature, my only surviving child, a girl, my lord, whom I should feel a mother's pride in showing to you; she has been thought extremely like me—I know not if it be so. On this point, my dear lord, you must judge for yourself."

"And so I will, charming Mrs. O'Donagough. But if I find it so, may the gods protect me! I know not what is to

*Interview between Lord Muckleburn and*

become of my heart. O'Donagough! O'Donagough!" repeated the happy-looking nobleman, with an air of great enjoyment, "may I die, madam, if I do not even admire your name. I used to think your former one the most euphonious in the world, because it softened so sweetly into Barnabbia; you know of old my passion for the *dolce lingua*. But methinks O'Donagough will undergo the same delicious process as well. May I not now call you *la mia magnifica O'Donnaccia?*"

His lordship paused for a moment, half frightened at his own audacity, as he remembered that it was just possible his charming old friend might know enough of the language of which she used to proclaim "her idolatry," to comprehend the "delicious process" rather too well; but the charming smile with which she listened to him, soon removed his doubts, and he remained convinced that, by whatever name he might choose to call her, she was, and ever must be, the most invaluable addition to his acquaintance that he could ever hope to make.

Their *tête-à-tête*, however, was soon brought to a conclusion by the rather boisterous entrance of Patty on her return from her visit to the Miss Perkinses.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, "here is my child! my only surviving child, my dear lord! permit me to present her to your lordship." And so saying, she rose up in all her greatness, moral and physical, or, in plainer English, in all the flutter of expansive drapery and excited spirits, and throwing one of her arms round the person of her daughter, brought her close before the eyes of the admiring peer. Lord Mucklebury did not rise, for which his corpulency must be pleaded as an excuse, but he received the radiant young lady with a smile, and, after looking at her for a moment, drew her towards him by the hand that had been placed in his, and kissed her.

The words Lord and Lordship had sufficed to enlighten Patty as to the identity of the *great* personage who thus honoured her. She knew it must be her mamma's often-quoted dear friend, Lord Mucklebury; and therefore, though under other circumstances it is possible that she might not have felt particularly grateful for the salute, she now took it in very good part, and even grinned a little as she withdrew herself with a courtesy from before the condescending nobleman.

"An extremely fine young lady, indeed!" said his lordship, "and a most charming likeness of her mamma!"

"You find her like me, my lord?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, in an accent of great tenderness. "Ah! my dear lord! no mother can ever hear that without pleasure!"

"Upon my honour, madam," replied his lordship, again spreading his hand upon his breast, "it is impossible in this instance to say whether mother or daughter ought to feel the most flattered by hearing of the resemblance. This young lady,

all blooming as she is, may feel perfectly assured that her mother bloomed as brilliantly before her, and that charming mother herself, while looking on the prodigiously fine young creature to whom she has given birth, may smile with two-fold rapture, conscious that she is gazing at once upon herself and child."

This fine speech rather astonished Patty, and she opened her great eyes, and gave her mother a look that seemed to say so. But Mrs. O'Donagough, with her usual happy presence of mind, converted this somewhat impertinent stare into a compliment, by saying—

"Ah, my Patty! How well I understand that look! you are quite right, dearest! My darling girl is peculiarly alive to the charm of graceful manners, my dear lord; and, sweet creature! she is too young to disguise what she feels."

"Sweet creature! sweet creatures both!" cried Lord Mucklebury, with great enthusiasm. "Well dearest!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, playfully untying her daughter's bonnet, and arranging the multitudinous ringlets of her black hair,—"And how did you leave our friends?"

"Oh lor!—There's a fine kettle of fish there, mamma," replied the young lady. "Matilda is in *such* a way!"

"Well, well, love; we'll hear all that by-and-by. It is such an affectionate young heart, my lord! Where she attaches herself, the slightest circumstances appear to her of consequence."

"I hope, my dear madam," replied his lordship, "that she will speedily both feel and inspire precisely the attachment which may be most agreeable to you, and herself too."

Patty replied to this with a toss which seemed to say that all that had happened already; but her mother shook her head, and waved her hand, as if she deprecated the awful thought.

"Alas!" she exclaimed, "she is a child, my lord!" Then abruptly turning to the young lady, she said, "Go, my love, go and find your father; he is in the library, I believe. Tell him that the valued friend he has so often heard me mention—tell him—that Lord Mucklebury is here!"

Patty left the room, and Mrs. O'Donagough lowering her voice, which lisped a little, as was usual with her, when in full glory, said,—

"My dear lord, your suggestion, which goes to my very heart from the interest it evinces in the welfare of my child. your suggestion, my dear lord, induces me to communicate to your friendly ear a circumstance which must, for the present, be secret from the world. My sweet girl has already, child as she is, inspired and conceived the attachment of which your lordship speaks, and the connection is so desirable, that we do not think we should be justifiable in interfering to prevent it, merely on account of her youth. My darling Patty is engaged to Sir Henry Seymour."

"Engaged to Sir Henry Seymour?" repeated Lord Muckle-bury, interrogatively, and with a look of considerable surprise; "Do you mean Sir Henry Seymour, of Hartley Hall?"

"Yes!" replied the undaunted Mrs. O'Donagough, "that is the name of one of his places; he is a ward of a near connection of mine, Sir Edward Stephenson."

"Certainly, Sir Henry Seymour is, or rather was, his ward: but I did not know, my dear Mrs. Barnaby—I beg your pardon, your present name often escapes me—I did not know that you were related to Sir Edward Stephenson."

"Not exactly *related*, my lord, but nearly connected; Lady Stephenson's brother, General Hubert, is my nephew by marriage."

"General Hubert your nephew, my dear madam!" exclaimed the peer with inexpressible astonishment, "upon my honour I had no idea of it."

"It is even so, my lord," replied the lady, a little piqued, perhaps, at the surprise so freely shown, but greatly pleased at the sort of *coup de théâtre* effect of the discovery.

While this interesting communication was making in the drawing-room, Patty had made her way into the library, where she found her father and Foxcroft in very close consultation.

"So *you* are here, are you?" said Patty, addressing the ex-lieutenant, and accompanying the question with a very scornful grimace, that did honour to the courageous firmness of her friendship for the unhappy Matilda. "You'll find these quarters too hot for you, Mr. Captain, if I don't much mistake," she added; "for you may depend upon it I am not going to give up having my own particular friend, Matilda Perkins, here—and I should be happy to know what you would think of meeting her?"

"I do assure you, my dear young lady, I should not feel the least objection in the world to meeting your amiable friend, and she must have altogether mistaken my motives, if she attributes anything to me which ought to occasion any coolness between us. Unhappily my income is insufficient to permit my marrying a lady without fortune, however charming she may be; but however much this may be a matter of regret on my side, it surely ought not to be a matter of resentment on hers."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" replied Patty, turning her back upon him, and addressing her father. "I say, pap," said she, "there is my Lord Muckle something or other up stairs. It is mamma's great friend, you know, that she is so often crowing about, and you must come up this very minute, whether you like it or not."

"Is that the message that your mother sent to me, Patty?" demanded Mr. O'Donagough.

"My eye, no, papa! Mamma's as soft and as sweet as the flowers in May, now that she has got this Lord Muckle with her, so come along."

"And so I will, Patty; but you must shake hands with Foxcroft first."

"I had rather shake hands with a toad, than with a false-hearted lover," said Patty.

"Don't stand there, talking stuff to me," replied her father, with the aspect that always won belief as to his being in earnest. So Patty shook hands with Mr. Foxcroft, who then took his departure, but she relieved her feelings by performing sundry grimaces to her father's back as she followed him up the stairs.

Nothing could be better than the style in which Mr. O'Donagough permitted himself to be presented to the gay old nobleman, and the few minutes of conversation which followed between them, left exactly the impression on his lordship's mind he intended; namely, that Mr. O'Donagough was certainly a very decent sort of person, though he had such a queer wife.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

We must not linger to watch every circumstance by which Mr. O'Donagough was led, or rather, by which he led himself, into precisely the position which he desired to fill in the motley mosaic of London society. He kept his Parisian model well in view, and well, too, did he manage all the turnings and windings, the sketchings and shadings, necessary to the production of a perfect copy. During the two years that General Hubert's family remained abroad, he and his lady between them had contrived to make a circle of acquaintance the most heterogeneous, perhaps, that ever met together in a London drawing-room, which, on the score of variety, is saying a good deal for it.

More, perhaps, for the purpose of maintaining his influence over Sir Henry Seymour, by showing how easy it was for him to betray the foolish secret which the young man so pertinaciously desired to keep, than for any particular wish for their society, Mr. O'Donagough had taken especial pains to make the acquaintance of Sir Edward and Lady Stephenson; an ambitious project in which he was greatly assisted by the gentle Lady Stephenson's wish not to appear proud or repulsive to the near relations of her dear sister Agnes. The gay and wealthy Frederic too, and not a few more of an equally elevated station in society, were frequently not displeased at finding card-tables and high stakes in a private drawing-room, though he, and they too, might have felt considerable repugnance to having their names quoted as frequenters of gaming clubs.

Lord Mucklebury, and his free-and-easy son also, not unfrequently amused themselves in the receiving rooms of Curzon-street, while Sir Henry Seymour, seeing the statements of O'Donagough respecting his family connection with the Huberts and Stephensons so fully proved, fell completely into the snare

that was laid for him, and little as he liked his society, became the frequent guest of the man whose feelings of friendly good will were so extremely important to him. Happy, indeed, did he often think himself at being able, at the risk of losing his money, perhaps, but with the certainty of enjoying an excellent rubber, to escape from the affectionate friendship of Mrs. O'Donagough, and the still more oppressive coquetries of her daughter. A multitude of others, whose names are of no importance to the narrative, were also gradually added to the O'Donagough list of acquaintance, till, by degrees, their *soirées* became actually crowded, while the quiet master of the mansion kept his station with great constancy in the small third room, with his faithful Foxcroft ever hovering near him, but his *partie de jeu* varying as occasion required. The *great game* he was playing at this time, without referring to any particular stakes, whether at whist or piquet, was too important to permit any considerations of minor economy to interfere with it. His rooms were splendidly lighted; strong coffee, excellent liqueurs, and abundant ices, were freely distributed; and though Mrs. O'Donagough, in the ecstasy of finding herself so immensely important a personage, did sometimes exceed both in dress and demeanour the ordinary bounds of sober elegance, yet, on the whole, she was by no means an inefficient partner in the concern. She was indefatigable in her efforts to increase her circle of acquaintance, and what with her handsome house, showy carriage, magnificent dress, and universally recognised auntship to Mrs. General Hubert, these efforts were more successful than those who knew Mrs. O'Donagough best would have deemed possible. Her watchful husband, therefore, was, on the whole, exceedingly well contented, and still continued to think that "his Barnaby" was as well qualified to fill the splendid station in which her good fortune had placed her, as any lady he knew. Not that he was blind to the species of gratification enjoyed in her society by Lord Mucklebury, his son, and some others of the same stamp; but as he perceived that many of

**Those who came to laugh, remained to *play*,**

he understood what he was about too well to quarrel with any of them.

In this manner, and with a degree of success which soon removed from his own mind every fear lest his bold project should fail, Mr. O'Donagough went on with a steady, quiet, unruffled exterior of respectability, which effectually concealed all that it was necessary for his interest should be hidden.

Few, or rather none, of those who were not professionally interested in the fact, were aware *how* deep were the stakes nightly played for in Mr. O'Donagough's drawing-room. For if it happened that some rich, but luckless novice became a vic-

tim, the lamented adventure was always made to appear as something purely accidental, as to its extent, and merely the consequence of the temporary excitement of the parties, which "really was very foolish, and must not happen again."

Such was the prosperous state of the O'Donagough affairs, when the interval destined to Montagu Hubert's itinerant studies between school and college being over, the general and his family returned to England.

Sharp was the sparkle of Mrs. O'Donagough's still unextinguished eye, when, as she sipped her coffee and luxuriantly enjoyed the columns of the *Morning Post*, she came upon the following paragraph:—"Arrived at their mansion in Berkeley-square, Lieutenant-General Hubert, his lady, and suite."

"That's delightful!" she exclaimed; "I declare to heaven that I shall have almost everything I want and wish in the world, if I do but get Agnes and the general here only just to witness one of our best nights! and that crooked-back, little aunt Betsy too! It is not very likely that she should *see* it, but she'll hear of it, Donny, won't she? Don't you enjoy the idea of it?"

"To tell you the truth, my dear, I do not care one single straw about it," replied Mr. O'Donagough. "A year or two ago, indeed, when our circumstances were different, that is, I mean, before we were quite settled, I certainly thought that it was important, for Patty's sake particularly, that we should be on good terms with these Huberts,—but now, it surely can make no difference whatever—and her presentation at St. James's, you know, is all settled already."

"You may cry down my relations as much as you please," replied his highly-incensed lady, "but you are monstrously mistaken, and that I can tell you, sir, if you fancy that the name of Hubert is of no importance to us; often and often, when I have said not a word about it, I have seen its effect—I know not how it may be in your back drawing-room set, Mr. Allen O'Donagough, but this I *do* know, that half, if not all the very best people in my front one, have been got at by means of their knowing that Agnes was my niece. And as to going to court, you may depend upon it that I shall *not* go, notwithstanding all Lady Susan Deerwell's kindness, without taking care to know that Mrs. General Hubert will be at the same drawing-room. Of course Elizabeth will be presented this year, and it will be extremely advantageous that the cousins should be presented at the same time; it will read so well in the papers! —and it is so easy to get it in, you know."

"You are a clever creature, my Barnaby, and I am not going to deny it," said her husband, with a complacent smile. "I only meant to observe that we had gone on very well during the last two years."

"Well? thank God we have! I am sure I am ready enough to acknowledge that; but still, if you please, Donny, we will not cut the Huberts."

"By no means, my dear,—I have no such intention; quite the contrary; indeed, I would rather you should leave cards there than not; it will be more civil."

This condescending assurance was quite sincere. Mr. Allen O'Donagough really had no objection to his lady's visiting General Hubert's family; nevertheless, it was equally true that he did *not* care one single straw about it. On first setting off on the bold and ambitious course he was now pursuing, he had seized with a masterly hand upon every object that could help his progress, but now, feeling himself completely afloat, he rather feared impediment than hoped for assistance, from a too-near contact with those around him; and though not insensible to the eligibility of Patty's having such cousins, and his lady such a niece, he was not at all desirous of admitting General Hubert to any very close degree of intimacy.

Such being the prosperous state of her papa, it can hardly be doubted that the state of Miss Patty was prosperous too; and to a certain degree it certainly was so. She was dressed as smartly as she could possibly desire; had *carte blanche* as to the invitations she might wish to give her friend Matilda; drove in an open barouche with her mamma in the Park every Sunday, and in all fashionable streets during every other day; and finally, was permitted to flirt as much as she liked, with anybody, and everybody. All this was very delightful, yet Patty was not quite contented, nevertheless. By degrees she brought herself to acknowledge that Jack was neither more nor less than a good-for-nothing, false-hearted fellow, who had never intended really and truly to marry her, and who in his heart cared more for playing whist, than for anything else in the world. All this she acknowledged to Matilda, though to both mother and father she still persisted that she *had been* engaged to him, quite entirely engaged to him, but that she did not much care whether it came to anything or not. Of this statement her papa did not believe a single word, though he never for a moment hinted his incredulity either to herself or any one else. What Mrs. O'Donagough's opinion on the subject might have been, it was not so easy to say; because on some occasions she did not scruple to declare (as in the case of Lord Mucklebury), that she believed the engagement was still going on, though Patty was such a coquettish young thing that she should not be at all surprised if she turned round and changed her mind any day. While to others, particularly to all young men of rank or fortune, she stated confidentially that such an engagement *had* existed, but it was clear to her that her dear girl began to doubt her own feelings on the subject, in which case nothing on earth would ever

induce her, or her beloved Mr. O'D., to utter a word that might influence her; for, excellent as the connection was, they were quite determined, on this and every other occasion, to let their only darling consult her own pure heart, and nothing else!

In the midst of all this contradictory variety, Patty, while endeavouring to look mysterious to both father and mother, and saying little on the subject to either, took to hating Jack in her very heart of hearts, most thoroughly and sincerely, and she would have gone very considerable lengths, as she confessed to her friend, to plague him as he deserved. A feeling in no degree less hostile had also, very naturally, supplied, in the breast of the tender Matilda, the place of all other sentiments towards Mr. Foxcroft; and it is probable that nothing but their wholesome fear of Mr. O'Donagough kept either fair one within the bounds of moderate rudeness, whenever their faithless swains approached them. Nevertheless Patty *had* her flirtations, and Miss Matilda did her very best to have hers too, so that there was not wanting between them a constant fund of confidential secrets which nourished and sustained their friendship in all its pristine warmth and purity.

Having ascertained the affronting indifference of her husband respecting General and Mrs. Hubert, Mrs. O'Donagough called him not again to her councils respecting them, but quietly settled in her own mind how to indulge herself, by fully displaying to them, and to all their daughters and sons, the spectacle of her greatness.

Amongst other simulations of fashionable manners adopted by the prosperous adventurer and his family, was their ignorance and independence of each other's occupations and engagements before dinner. Mrs. O'Donagough was blessed by having at her command one of the most showy carriages in London. Arms, embellished by a prodigious number of splendid quarterings, adorned the panels, the hammer-cloth hung stiff with embroidery of the same, blinds of crimson silk aided the glowing complexions within, and tags, tassels, and silver lace decorated those without. Let those who best know Mrs. O'Donagough, judge what her feelings were in driving to the door of Mrs. Hubert in such an equipage as this.

With care and skill she chose that hour for her visit at which ladies are most certainly visible at home; namely, the interval between the two o'clock luncheon, and the three o'clock *sortie* for shopping.

Mrs. O'Donagough watched with some emotion the colloquy between the servants at the door, but all her doubts and fears were speedily put to the rout by the throwing wide the door of her carriage, and the presentation of the arm that was to assist in her descent from it.

"You will sit in the carriage, and wait for us, my dears,"

said the swelling lady, with condescending dignity, to the two Miss Perkinses, who occupied the back of the carriage.

"Oh! yes, ma'am! we shall be quite amused, I'm sure," returned Miss Matilda.

"Pray do not think of us!" meekly ejaculated her sister.

"No, no, no,—of course not, my dear; you will do very well I dare say; take care about drawing up and down the windows. What do you poke that beautifully-laced pocket-handkerchief into your bag for, Patty? I did not buy it for that, I promise you."

"And that's true, and no lie," said Patty, winking at her friend, as she prepared in her usual style to precipitate herself out of the carriage after her mamma, but at the same time obeying the maternal behest, and drawing forth the handkerchief with a flourish that sent it into the eyes of the simpering Louisa.

There were several persons in Mrs. Hubert's drawing-room when Mrs. and Miss O'Donagough were ushered into it. At a small table apart, near a window, sat two very lovely girls, each occupied before a little desk, one copying a page of MS. music, and the other drawing. Behind the chair of the latter stood a tall and graceful young man, whose head was bent forward as in the act of criticising the performance. He started as the servant distinctly pronounced the words "Mrs. and Miss O'Donagough," but did not immediately look up.

On a sofa near a loo-table at the upper end of the room sat Mrs. Hubert, and beside her an elegant-looking little woman, apparently some few years older than herself, but whose black eyes, neatly-cut little features, and fine teeth, still gave her a right to be called a pretty woman. In a deep chair on the opposite side of the table, another lady, about the same age, perhaps, but infinitely less well-looking, employed herself by incessantly twitching a green ribbon, which being attached to the collar of a poodle lap-dog, occasioned from time to time a sharp little bark that seemed to delight her. Mrs. O'Donagough had observed a carriage waiting at the door, and the dress of these last-mentioned ladies showed that it was for them it waited, and that they, too, were morning visitors.

If satin, feathers, and a profusion of the finest lace, could have made Mrs. O'Donagough look elegant, she would have looked elegant then, for she was dressed like a duchess; nor was her daughter Patty much less splendid; and even had their names been unknown to all the party, their appearance was altogether such as imperiously to have commanded attention. But their names were not unknown to any individual there.

It is possible that Mrs. Hubert was not particularly delighted by this early visit from her remarkable aunt, but most certainly she felt considerable consolation from perceiving that her manners, though affectionately familiar, were less vehemently caressing

than formerly. In fact, Mrs. O'Donagough felt, and thanked God for the same, that there was no longer any occasion for it; besides, it was impossible to press anybody to her heart now, without risking the injury of her exquisite toilet, so she only stretched out one arm as she advanced, saying with a good deal of her most elegant lisp, "How do, Agnes, dear? What an age, isn't it? You would hardly know Patty, would you? How are the children?"

Mrs. Hubert stepped forward, and received the large offered hand very gracefully, giving a smiling answer to each question. Patty followed after, and notwithstanding her anti-Hubert prejudices, stretched out her hand too, which was also received by Mrs. Hubert with a smile, while she turned her head towards the two young ladies at the window, saying, "Here is your cousin Martha, my dear Elizabeth." Thus called upon, a tall, slight, lovely girl rose from the place she occupied, laid her pencil on her desk, and came forward.

"My goodness! Are you Elizabeth?" exclaimed Patty, really too much engaged by staring at her, to perceive her offered hand. "Well, I'm sure I should never have known you again—I wonder if I'm as much altered as you?"

"I do not think you are at all altered," replied Elizabeth, sitting down beside her. "But you are looking very well."

"Yes, I am always very well, and you know I have always got a fresh colour," replied Patty, who was frequently apt to suspect, when people told her she looked well, that they might, perhaps, be thinking she had helped herself to a little of her mamma's rouge. "Hardly anybody has got as much colour as I have; I am sure I often wish I hadn't so much, people stare so. But my goodness! is that Emily?"

"Oh no! Emily still looks quite like a little girl; that is Miss Seymour."

As she said this, the tall young man stood upright, and stepping forward, extended a hand to Mrs. O'Donagough, while at the same time he paid his compliments to her daughter, by inquiring very civilly after her health.

"Soh! you are here, are you, Sir Henry. How d'ye do?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, thrusting a hand towards the young man over her shoulder, and throwing her plumed head on one side, with a sort of lolloping affectation that was intended to indicate great intimacy.

"I hope Mr. O'Donagough is quite well, ma'am?" said the young baronet, with a considerable augmentation of colour.

"Quite well, dear Seymour," replied the great lady; "I hope we shall see you to-night? How late we kept it up, Tuesday, didn't we? But Lord Mucklebury is always so delightful!"

While this was passing, the lady seated on the sofa by Mrs. Hubert, looked and listened with great appearance of interest

and amusement, but said nothing. At length Agnes, who had been watching her with a laughing countenance, addressed Mrs. O'Donagough: "You do not remember these ladies, aunt?" and as she spoke, she pointed to both her bonneted visitors.

"Remember them? No, really! have I ever met them before? I live in such a round of company, that, upon my honour, it is perfectly impossible to remember one face from another. You must excuse me, ladies, if I have the honour of your acquaintance, but I have not the slightest recollection of you."

"My name is Henderson," said the lady on the sofa,—"but formerly it was Mary Peters."

"Mary Peters!" ejaculated the energetic Mrs. O'Donagough, almost with a shriek, "Mary Peters! my own dear first husband's own niece! Gracious heaven! Well, to be sure, this is a most extraordinary discovery! And this?" turning to the plain-looking, middle-aged mistress of the lap-dog, "this must be, yes, to be sure, this must be Elizabeth?"

"Very true, indeed, I certainly am Elizabeth," replied the lady she addressed; "but I am sure I do not wonder at your not knowing me at first, for I had not the least notion who you was. I never saw anybody grow so large in my life."

"You are so dreadfully thin yourself, my dear, that I have no doubt I *do* look rather large to you;" then turning her back in rather a marked manner to her former ally, she addressed an almost interminable string of questions to her sister.

"And so you are married, Mary, are you? Well! that's well. I can't say I am any great friend to old-maidism—it spoils people's tempers. I have had three—God bless me!—I mean I have had two husbands, both first-rate, quite first-rate men in their way, and I can't say I think I should have had the fine temper that I believe everybody allows I have got, if I had remained single all my life. However, perhaps it is not quite civil to say so just now. Are neither of your sisters married, my dear Mary?"

"Oh yes! Lucy has been married many years, and has a very large family!"

"Poor thing!" said Mrs. O'Donagough with a deep sigh; "then I *do* pity her! There certainly *is* nothing so pitiable as having a large family!"

"Is it worse than being an old maid?" said Miss Elizabeth Peters, with a sneer.

"No, my dear!" replied Mrs. O'Donagough, turning sharply round upon her; "nothing, of course, can be so bad as that. And how is your mother, Mary? and your father? and James, I dare say he is married, isn't he?"

"Yes, ma'am, he is married also."

"And what sort of style are you all living in? comfortable, I hope? We must not mind your being a little humdrum, if

you are comfortable; but let that be as it may, you must come and see me; I think my drawing-rooms will please you. But, dear me! how everything depends upon comparison! I remember as well as if it was but yesterday, thinking your drawing-rooms in Rodney-place quite beautiful, but when you come to see mine, my dear, you won't expect me to think so any longer. In fact, my dear Mr. O'Donagough has so very superior a taste that I must not talk of comparing what he orders to anything else; I really want you to see my new carriage, Agnes—it will strike you, as something quite out of the common way."

Mrs. Hubert smiled, and bowed, and looked at Sir Henry Seymour, and then at her lovely daughter, as if to consult them both as to what her aunt was talking about, being herself quite at a loss to decide whether she were in jest or earnest. But she did not venture to speak, for fear of making some blunder, and Mrs. O'Donagough, increasing every moment in the delightful consciousness of causing unbounded astonishment, began again.

"And pray, Agnes dear, who is that?" she said, nodding her plumes in the direction of Miss Seymour; "it is not one of Frederic Stephenson's girls, is it?"

"That young lady is Miss Seymour," replied Mrs. Hubert, gravely.

"A sister of yours, my dear Sir Henry, eh? Pray introduce her,—I shall be quite delighted."

Caroline Seymour, who was several years younger than her brother, and one of the most timid creatures that ever existed, started up the moment these words were spoken, and before her brother could perform the ceremony demanded of him, was already, though trembling and covered with blushes, close to Mrs. O'Donagough, and extending her hand with an air that gave her the appearance of being eagerly impatient to make the acquaintance.

Mrs. Hubert looked at her with astonishment, while Elizabeth Hubert, not too well knowing what she herself intended, rose also, and seizing the other hand of her young friend, endeavoured to draw her away, convinced that she was acting under some delusion, and that she fancied Mrs. O'Donagough had some claim upon her acquaintance which it was necessary she should acknowledge.

Elizabeth Hubert was partly right. Poor Caroline knew that the terrible-looking woman before whom she stood and trembled, *had* a claim upon her acquaintance, which, let her hate it ever so much, she would have acknowledged in church or market, in court or city, in public or in private. Clinging to her brother as her protector and only relative, loving him beyond all things, and knowing herself, all childish as she was, to be his only *confidante* and adviser in the unfortunate secret, to the preservation of which he attached so much importance, she

would have knelt at the feet of Mrs. O'Donagough, rather than offend her, knowing too well that this secret was in her keeping.

Mrs. O'Donagough herself looked rather astonished, and though in her present mood she would hardly have felt a salutation from royalty itself more than she had a right to expect, she nevertheless had some consciousness that this peculiar eagerness to make her acquaintance must have a peculiar cause, which, however, she was at no loss to find, for, after a moment's consideration, she became persuaded that her shy, but still enamoured brother, must have enjoined it.

"A very nice, sweet-looking girl, indeed, Sir Henry," said Mrs. O'Donagough, continuing to hold Caroline's hand, as in a vice, and looking up in her face with a leer of playful protection; "you may bring her to us whenever you will, Sir Henry. Patty, who, as you well know, is the sweetest-tempered creature in the world, will be quite delighted to take notice of her, and she will soon teach her not to be so terribly shy; upon my honour, the dear girl trembles like an aspen leaf. You must not be afraid of us, my dear—your brother, Sir Henry, you know, is a very old friend of ours, he and Patty, you know, are great cronies. There, come, don't quiver and quake so, as if you were talking to some proud stiff old empress; ask your brother if we ever stand upon ceremony with him? No, no, all that is nonsense, my dear; let my style and station be what they may, I shall never hold myself above taking notice of warm-hearted, affectionate young people, who are fond of us; and that I am quite sure you will be, as well as your brother Henry. Patty! make room for this dear girl on that great three-cornered chair that you have put yourself into—nothing like close quarters for making intimate acquaintance."

Thus commanded, Patty did collect her flowing *gros de Naples* a little, and Miss Seymour placed her shrinking, delicate figure beside that of the bouncing beauty. But Patty, suddenly catching the expression of Sir Henry's countenance, which certainly spoke anything but pleasure at the position of his sister, remembered all her injuries at once, and very decidedly shouldering the new friend her mother had bestowed on her, exclaimed,

"Lor! mamma! I wonder you didn't tell her to sit in my lap."

"Caroline!" said Sir Henry, in a voice neither clear nor sweet, "I beg that you will not inconvenience Miss O'Donagough; place yourself here, if you please;" and he pushed a chair towards her as he spoke.

The timid girl immediately took possession of it, and considering that, notwithstanding her mimosa-like shyness, she had been always accounted peculiarly graceful in her demeanour, she certainly looked more awkward and abashed than was at all intelligible. Mrs. O'Donagough laughed.

"Sir Henry is right, Patty, isn't he?" said she, "he wouldn't mind it himself, perhaps, but I suppose he thinks young ladies' dresses mayn't agree, whatever they do themselves—it did look a little like what we call riding *Jolliphant* in my country, two ladies upon one horse, you know—and the men never approve of that. But, come Patty! upon my honour and life we mustn't be staying any longer. What will Lady Susan say if we don't keep our appointment with her? Good bye, Agnes—good bye, Elizabeth—be sure you come to see me, Mary. What's your name? Henderson? Well! I shall be very glad to see you: of course, when a woman marries again, the relations of her first husband can't be quite so near and dear to her as a child by the second. But, notwithstanding that, I'll promise to make you welcome, and my old friend Elizabeth here, too, though she does look a little as if she could not forgive my saying she was thin, and quizzing her about being an old maid. Forget and forgive, Elizabeth! you and I used to be monstrous thick, you know; and so we will again, if you'll come and tell me lots of Clifton gossip, as you used to do. Good bye, you dear little Seymour, you! she is the very picture of her brother, and he is such a pet with us all! Good bye, Sir Henry! don't come down. There is nobody puts me into my carriage, like my own footman."

With these words, and a sort of circular nod, she swam out of the room; and Patty, with another nod, rather less circular, and infinitely less gracious, bounced after her; though not, it may be observed, without Mrs. Hubert's allowing to herself, that though as vulgar as ever, the young lady had decidedly grown extremely handsome.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

For a full minute and a half after the departure of Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter, silence the most perfect reigned in the drawing-room of Mrs. Hubert. The palsy of astonishment had fallen upon them all, with the exception of poor Sir Henry, and their powers of articulation seemed destroyed by it. Mrs. Henderson was the first who recovered herself sufficiently to speak.

"Why did you not tell me, Agnes, into what full-blown dignity your aunt was expanded? Full well do I remember the sort of terror and trembling with which my mother used to contemplate her feathers and flounces at Clifton. But though the feathers and flounces remain much the same, the change in their august wearer is prodigious! I do not mean solely from her having spread out into such startling immensity,—you had in some degree prepared me for that. But why did you conceal the increase of wealth and dignity which seems to have fallen upon her? my weak mind is perfectly overpowered."

"Not more than mine, dear Mary!" replied Mrs. Hubert, laughing; "I do not comprehend it the least in the world. She surprised us, as I told you, by suddenly descending upon us at Brighton, when we all fancied she was safely lodged for life in Australia. But though very showily dressed, and perpetually assuring us that her husband was a man of family and fortune, and a most perfect gentleman, we never had any reason to believe that these statements were more strictly correct respecting Mr. O'Donagough's position in life, than respecting himself; he is by no means an ill-behaved person, looking more like a methodist parson than anything else, but no more like a gentleman than Elizabeth's poodle; and as to their manner of living, it was very nearly what you may remember my aunt's to have been at Clifton. The carriage and horses, and the footmen, are all quite new."

"Have *you* known them long, Sir Henry Seymour?" said Mrs. Henderson, turning to the young baronet.

"Yes,—no, no, not very long, certainly," he replied, while his whole face became crimson.

"At any rate, you seem to be treated as a most intimate friend," observed Mrs. Hubert, looking at him with astonishment, "and perhaps you may be able to tell, better than any of us, though we are all such near relations, how long Mrs. O'Donagough has lived in a fine house in Curzon-street, and possessed a carriage and footman to talk about."

"She certainly meets me with much familiarity," replied the young man, dropping his eyes, but at the same time permitting his countenance to express no inconsiderable degree of *hauteur*, "yet, believe me, I have no right to boast of knowing much about her. I have never known her in London but in this same house in Curzon-street, and as far as I know, she has always had a carriage."

"Well, then! all we can say, dear Mary, is that our aunt is a richer lady than we imagined," said Mrs. Hubert.

"Oh! she always told us she was very rich, you know," said Miss Peters, "and I remember the time when she told my poor father that she intended to leave all her money to us, because it came from our uncle Barnaby."

"Nay, Elizabeth, it cannot be Barnaby money that supports this gay London establishment. I remember your good uncle's manner of living perfectly. *My* good uncle, let me call him too, for it is impossible that anything could be more kind and liberal than he was to me. But his fortune could never, I am very sure, support the style of living that we have been hearing of to-day."

"Is it possible, then, that the man she brought to our house, just before you married, Agnes, and with whom she immediately sailed for Australia, could have been really a man of family and

fortune, as she says? I remember the man perfectly. He was a great many years younger than herself, and it is hardly conceivable that he should have married such a woman, excepting for the sake of her fortune."

"And he was a very handsome man, too. I remember him perfectly, as well as you, Mary," observed Elizabeth Peters, "and I always supposed that he must have married aunt Barnaby, because he had no fortune of his own."

"Mr. O'Donagough has lost his beauty since that time, Elizabeth, as I think you will allow, when you see him; and, I confess, I do not perceive any remains of it. I have not, indeed, the slightest recollection as to what he was like, when he made his visit in Rodney-place; but at present he is anything but well-looking," said Mrs. Hubert.

"I suppose a call upon my uncle Barnaby's widow is a duty imperative upon us?" said Mrs. Henderson. "I think my mother herself would say so, though she was not very particularly partial to the lady personally."

"I think you must go there, dear friend," returned Agnes, "and in your case this offering to propriety is easily paid. You do not live in London, and may therefore consider yourselves safe from any great or lasting annoyance. This early visit to us would, I confess, rather alarm me for our peace and quiet, were it not that I perceive we are no longer of the same importance to her as formerly. Her manner to me is entirely changed. I, as well as you, Mary, escaped without even an embrace, and I assure you that the time has been, since her return from Australia, when she has held me so long in her arms, that I almost felt doubtful if I should escape from them alive. My dear father too! Thank heaven! she seems altogether to have forgotten him; he is in very delicate health, and her vehement caresses, and unceasing attentions fatigued him dreadfully. Besides, dear man! he always seemed to think that it would be treating my mother's memory with disrespect, if he were otherwise than affectionate to her sister; I have perfectly dreaded his returning to England, lest he should be again thrown in her way. But she never named him, and it is evident to me that she has got into a set of her own that she prefers to every other. I shall return her call without the slightest feeling of alarm, and we can go together, if you like it."

It is probable that Mrs. Hubert prolonged this discussion a little, in order to give her young friend, Caroline Seymour, time to recover from the very evident embarrassment which the recent scene had occasioned her. Her brother was still hanging over her chair, and whispering something that seemed like a gentle remonstrance. Elizabeth Hubert sat gazing at them with a sort of painful surprise on her beautiful and expressive countenance, which did not escape her mother, who in her heart was

longing even for her dearly-loved Mrs. Henderson to go, that she might speak to her.

At length the visit of her old friends, who were in London only for a few weeks, was brought to a conclusion by Miss Peters reminding her sister of the necessity for their driving to some distant shop before they returned home to the early dinner which was to precede their going to the play. Sir Henry Seymour had taken his leave before, and Caroline, on whose soft cheek the traces of tears were visible when she raised her head to bid him adieu, followed him out of the room, and had not since returned, so that Mrs. Hubert and her daughter were *tête-à-tête*.

"What can be the reason, mamma, of Sir Henry Seymour's permitting his sister to make the acquaintance of Mrs. O'Donagough?" said Elizabeth, the moment their visitors were gone. "It is, it must be, his doing, and his wish. Caroline never has any will but his, yet it was impossible not to see her repugnance to this introduction, though she put herself forward in a way she never did before to meet it. What can it mean?"

"I am quite as much at a loss as you are, Elizabeth. Did Caroline ever mention to you her brother's acquaintance with the O'Donagoughs?"

"Yes, mamma; but what she said was not so much informing me of his acquaintance with them, as inquiring of me, whether they were really our relations."

"And when was this, Elizabeth?"

"During the fortnight that Sir Henry passed with us at Paris last year, when he brought over Caroline."

"Can you remember exactly what she said? She must have given some reason for asking the question."

"I recollect thinking that she felt very much ashamed at asking the question, and that was the reason I never mentioned it to you. She asked it very earnestly, and as if she were much interested in the answer; but when I had replied to all her questions, which I did, of course, very frankly, she coloured so much, and seemed, as I thought, to be so extremely ashamed of her curiosity, that I fancied it would be treacherous, and like betraying her having committed a fault, if I repeated the conversation to you."

"Has she ever referred to the conversation since?"

"Never."

"Will you tell me, Elizabeth, exactly what it was she did ask of you?"

Elizabeth meditated for a moment, and then replied—

"I remember perfectly that the question appeared to me at the time, to be *à propos* of nothing, and it was asked a very few hours after their arrival; as soon, indeed, as we were alone together. As well as I can recollect, her words were, 'Will you tell me, dear Elizabeth, if you have any relations of the

name of O'Donagough?' I answered, 'Yes, we have; mamma has an aunt who is married to a person of that name.' 'Have they ever been in Australia, and have they a daughter?' demanded Caroline. I answered 'Yes' to both these questions, and then ventured to inquire why she was so anxious to know. It was then that she seemed to think she was doing wrong, for she coloured violently, and actually trembled, exactly as she did to-day. 'It was my brother,' she said, 'it was on his account that I wished to know.' I wished excessively to ask for what reason he could be curious about it, but I did not, because I saw that she was positively suffering; so from that time to this, the name of O'Donagough has never been mentioned by either of us."

"Sir Henry must have met them accidentally," said Mrs. Hubert, "when they probably did us the honour to mention the relationship, which, perhaps, he did us the honour of disbelieving, and feeling some curiosity to ascertain the truth, commissioned his sister to inquire."

"Yes, exactly so, mamma; that is precisely the way in which I interpreted the thing myself, and it was because I thought the curiosity both natural and pardonable, that I chose to say nothing about it. But it strikes me that though your suggestion accounts perfectly for what passed at Paris, it throws no light whatever on the extraordinary scene of to-day. It was very natural that Sir Henry Seymour, if acquainted with the O'Donagough family, might doubt their relationship to you, mamma; but the having ascertained that such was the fact, could not surely render it necessary for Caroline to testify such extraordinary eagerness for an introduction, and such very vehement emotion when it took place. I saw Sir Henry's countenance too, and its expression was perfectly extraordinary. He may have been very much surprised, and shocked too, perhaps, at discovering that Mrs. O'Donagough was our aunt, though that is presuming him to be a very silly person indeed, but even *that* will not account, no, not in the least degree, for the species of emotion which his features betrayed. I am quite sure there is some mystery in all this."

"I cannot conceive the possibility of any," replied Mrs. Hubert. "The notion of Sir Henry Seymour and the family of O'Donagough having any mystery in common, is too preposterous; time generally explains all things, and we must trust to his agency, Elizabeth, to explain this."

The few moments occupied by this conversation was a longer period of time than Mrs. Hubert and her daughter had passed together *tête-à-tête* since their arrival in Berkeley-square, and another burst of thunder at the door now told them that it was over. Another, and another succeeded, as the time for the high tide of gossip approached, and the drawing-room looked almost full when again the thunder came, and Lord Mucklebury was announced.

This facetious nobleman, though not a very intimate, was a very old acquaintance of the Hubert family, and seeing that close access to Mrs. Hubert was for the time impossible, as every seat near her was occupied, he deposited his heavy person in a large *fauteuil* just behind Elizabeth, and after expressing in cordial but courtly phrase his admiration and astonishment at her growth and her beauty, he began uttering and discussing jokes and gossip, in his usual style, concerning everybody whom he conceived to be of her acquaintance.

"So, Sir Edward and his rich ward have settled accounts I hear, and are the best friends in the world again. They say that Sir Edward's management has been admirable, and that there never was known so profitable a minority. It is a strange match that he is going to make. I beg your pardon, however, my dear young lady, I totally forgot the near relationship."

"What match, my lord?" said Elizabeth, striving to speak tranquilly, "and of what relationship does your lordship speak?"

"Mrs. O'Donagough is your mother's aunt, my dear, is she not?"

"She is, my lord," replied the poor girl, with lips as white as ashes, and a voice so hoarse as to be hardly intelligible.

Lord Mucklebury perceived that she was suffering from some painful emotion, and a moment's thought convinced him that he had made a most unfortunate hit, and that this collateral descendant of his proud old friend, Lady Elizabeth Norris, was wounded beyond bearing by being reminded of her vulgar connections. Amused by this strong trait of hereditary feeling, yet much too really polite to be capable of exciting it further, his lordship rejoined in a tone of flourishing compliment.

"Distant as the connection is, Miss Hubert, there is some share of the same remarkable beauty that I now see before me. Sir Henry Seymour would never have become attached to Miss O'Donagough, if the young lady's eyes had not sparkled with something of kindred brightness to your own."

Another group of morning visitors entered at this moment, and among them Elizabeth fancied she saw some one to whom she wished immediately to pay her compliments. It appeared, however, that upon drawing near the door, she discovered that she was mistaken, for standing aside while the party passed in, she waited only till the doorway was clear, then slipped through it, and was not again visible that morning.

Mrs. Hubert had remarked her daughter's exit; she remarked also that she did not return, and wishing to inquire if it were any ailment which occasioned this sudden rétreat, she entered the dressing-room of Elizabeth before she proceeded to make her dinner toilet in her own.

"Is anything the matter with you, my love?" she said, approaching the easy-chair into which the young lady had

thrown herself; "why did you leave the drawing-room so suddenly? You look as if you had been crying, Elizabeth."

"No, mamma. There is nothing at all the matter with me, only I have been surprised, very much surprised; but the mystery is quite explained. I have found out, mamma, the reason why Caroline was so anxious to be introduced to the O'Donagoughs, and why she seemed so extremely interested about them."

"Have you, Elizabeth?" replied her mother, drawing a chair, and sitting down beside her. "Do, pray, communicate the discovery to me, for I confess the whole thing has piqued my curiosity exceedingly."

"Sir Henry Seymour is going to be married to my cousin Martha."

"Sir Henry Seymour going to be married to your cousin Martha? That is a very foolish jest, my dear, whoever invented it," replied her mother, with rather a disdainful smile.

"Lord Mucklebury did not speak of it as any jest, mamma, but as a fact perfectly well known. I am surprised as much as you can be," continued Elizabeth, "but I see no reason for doubting its truth; on the contrary, have we not the greatest reason for believing that it is true? How else can we account, mamma, for the strange scene of this morning?"

"I should account for it in any way, Elizabeth, rather than this," and there was a glow of painful feeling on Mrs. Hubert's cheek as she said these words, which caused Elizabeth to move still nearer to her, and to say as she took her hand and tenderly pressed it, "My dearest mother, is there any other possible way in which we can account for it?"

Mrs. Hubert did not immediately reply; there were many thoughts working together in her head, which kept her silent. The young man of whom they spoke was a favourite with her, though the vexation and anxiety which he had caused to his guardian were well known to her in every particular, for Lady Stephenson and herself were truly sisters. But notwithstanding all this, notwithstanding the lamentations she had been accustomed to hear concerning his aversion to a college life, and his very blamable frolic of secreting himself for nearly a year from the knowledge of his attached though somewhat pertinacious guardian, notwithstanding all this, Mrs. Hubert both liked and esteemed the youth. His tender devotion to his young orphan sister; his repentance for the wrong-headed obstinacy of his concealment expressed with such manly frankness; his joyous, yet gentle spirit, and the bright intelligence which sparkled through every lively sally, had won from her approval that she was aware was rapidly approaching to affection, and the more rapidly because her husband shared it. Neither of them, perhaps, were insensible to the evident admiration with which Elizabeth had inspired him, and, though

as yet the subject had never been named between them, neither of them felt indifferent about it, or unaware that it was hardly possible any man could propose for her that they should be more cordially inclined to approve. All this was too fully in Mrs. Hubert's head to make it at all easy for her to reply to her daughter's question. Elizabeth watched her mother's countenance during this interval, and, at length, she repeated, "Is it possible, mamma, to account for it otherwise?"

Thus forced to speak, she said, "Forgive me, Elizabeth, but I must have better authority than yours before I believe it. Lord Mucklebury is a professed jester—he probably meant to mystify you—or it is possible that amidst his flights and flourishes you have misunderstood him. So I shall not set down Sir Henry Seymour as the *fiancé* of Miss O'Donagough, till I have learnt it from some other quarter than the facetious Lord Mucklebury."

So saying, Mrs. Hubert rose, and, having received a very fervent kiss from her silent daughter, left her room, and immediately repaired to that of Miss Seymour.

The poor girl had thrown herself upon the bed, and, as it seemed, had actually cried herself to sleep. She started up as Mrs. Hubert approached the bed, and uttering something about being quite ashamed of her laziness, stood up, to hear what her kind friend was come to say to her.

"My dear Caroline," said Mrs. Hubert, "will you let me ask you how your brother first became acquainted with the O'Donagough family?"

An expression of the most painful kind took possession of the young girl's features, and after the struggle of a moment, her tears began to flow.

"I cannot bear to distress you, my dear child," said Mrs. Hubert, "nor can I comprehend how my question can do it. You are, of course, aware that Mrs. O'Donagough is a relation of mine, but both her husband and herself are persons so little likely to fall in your brother's way, that I feel curious to know the origin of their acquaintance."

Instead of replying, Miss Seymour only permitted her tears to flow afresh, and hid her face in her pocket-handkerchief.

"My dear Caroline! This emotion is most extraordinary! If the idea of this acquaintance is so painful to you, why did you appear so eager, my dear, to be included in it?"

"For my brother's sake, Mrs. Hubert, for his sake only; surely you must guess ——"

"*That I should never seek the acquaintance for my own,*" were the words which would have followed, had not the young lady, recollecting that Mrs. O'Donagough was the aunt of her kind hostess, suddenly stopped herself, amidst blushes and renewed agitation.

Mrs. Hubert waited for a moment to see if she would go c

but finding she did not, she dropped the hand she had taken, and saying, with a sigh which she could not repress, "Yes, my poor Caroline, I do guess," left the room.

## CHAPTER XXX.

As Mrs. O'Donagough descended the stairs from Mrs. Hubert's drawing-room, she suddenly recollected the existence of her beloved brother Mr. Willoughby; and, with a little inward laugh of delight at remembering how very much she was now above caring for the kindness and patronage of any little old man in the world, she stopped short in her passage through the hall, though it was ringing with the sound of "Mrs. O'Donagough's carriage," and demanded of the porter the address of this, till now, very precious connection.

On being informed that Mr. Willoughby resided in Park-lane, she determined to "take him," as she told Patty, and the Misses Perkins, in her way to Hyde Park, where she intended to regale the world of fashion for half an hour by the sight of herself and her bright-eyed daughter. Could the gentle Mr. Willoughby have had the slightest glimpse of fore-knowledge as to who was making her rattling, dashing way towards him, it is probable that, despite all his conjugal respect for the memory of his first lady, he would have retired to his bed-room, and declared himself, very truly perhaps, too ill to see any one. For the impression left by his adventures at Brighton was terrible, and of the kind not likely to evaporate by the process of meditation. But though in all the ordinary affairs of life it may be very truly said, that—

> Old experience doth attain
> To something like prophetic strain,

yet in this case it would have led him altogether wrong. A change had come over Mrs. O'Donagough, which insured his safety more effectually than any bolts and bars could have done, for had her feelings still retained the same ardent warmth towards him, such impediments would hardly have rendered him safe. But now the tempest of her love was effectually stilled, and all that remained of the violent emotions which had so strongly moved her, was a dignified yet condescending politeness, which, her dress also being taken into consideration, was sure to keep him from any further personal violence.

Fortunately the mild old gentleman was not alone, when his drawing-room door was gently opened by his well-taught servant, and the names of Mrs. and Miss. O'Donagough pronounced. His daughter, Mrs. Stephenson, was seated beside his arm-chair, and as he involuntarily exclaimed, "Oh dear! oh dear!" she cheered him by replying, "Never mind, papa! I'll stay with you; I want to see her again immensely. I am told she is

come into a great fortune, and that she is ten thousand times a greater curiosity than ever."

These words were hardly whispered, before the subject of them swam into the room radiant with rouge, and glossy as the richest satin could make her. Had she found Mr. Willoughby alone, it is very likely she might have been able to speak plain, and that a few moderate affectionate inquiries would have sufficed to satisfy her feelings, and to display as much of her changed circumstances as the occasion required; but the sight of Mrs. Stephenson inspired her with very different thoughts and purposes. She remembered how the noble spirit on which she prided herself had been shaken by the crowd in green and gold; and more bitterly still did she remember how often the application of the little lady's eye-glass had stood in the stead of every other salutation, when she had met her amidst the crowded promenades of Brighton. How her heart at that moment throbbed with thankfulness as she remembered that the lace on her mantlet cost a guinea a yard!

But her throat swelled, externally and internally too; a third chin supervened, and the clearness of her articulation was considerably affected. Patty followed, looking, past all contradiction, exceedingly handsome, but as much like a gentlewoman as a ringleted head in a hairdresser's shop window.

"How do, dear sir?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, lispingly, and holding out a single finger as she approached the idolised brother-in-law of former days. "I know you are but a poor creature as to health, and therefore I have waived all ceremony, and come to inquire for you without taking any notice of your not having waited upon me. Never mind about getting up; perhaps you have got the gout. There, there, sit down, and keep yourself quiet; you look dreadfully thin, to be sure, but yet I may pay you a compliment upon your complexion: if you ain't flushed, you've got a capital colour. But perhaps you may be heated, sir? Dear me! what a monstrous small room you have got! When you are well enough to come and see me, sir, in Curzon-street, you will quite enjoy the size of my rooms."

Inexpressibly relieved, Mr. Willoughby replied with great kindness of manner that he was very glad she had met with a house she liked, and hoped Mr. O'Donagough and the young lady were quite well.

"You do not remember me, Mrs. O'Donagough?" said Mrs. Stephenson, laughing; "we have never met since we left Brighton, and the gaieties of London have put all your former acquaintances out of your head. I hope I see you very well?"

"Yeas—perfectly well, I thank you. I adore London, and never really enjoyed my health till we settled here," replied Mrs. O'Donagough.

"It does, in truth, seem to have agreed with you extremely.

You look charmingly plump and well, and so does your daughter too; she is so wonderfully grown and improved, that I should not have known her without hearing her named. Have you seen your cousin Compton, lately, Miss Patty?"

"No, ma'am," said Miss Patty, very sulkily.

"Indeed? That is too bad of him!" rejoined the mischievous lady, "for he is in the Guards now, and constantly in town."

"Is he?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, in a tone of rather languid indifference; "I wonder I have never heard Seymour mention him. But Henry knows," she added, with a slight laugh, "that I never patronise mere boys."

"Who is Henry? Are you speaking of Sir Henry Seymour?" said Mrs. Stephenson, half amused and half puzzled.

"Yeas—Sir Henry Seymour; your brother Sir Edward's ward, you know. He is a great friend of ours," she added, after a pause, and with her eyes very fully directed to Patty.

"Impossible!" had very nearly escaped Mrs. Stephenson's lips in return; for she understood the look, and the accent too, exactly as it was intended she should do, and having ideas of her own on the subject of Sir Henry Seymour, which rendered the information they conveyed extremely far from agreeable, she had some difficulty not to pronounce a flat contradiction. But having thought better of it before the word was spoken, she only said, "Have you known him long?"

"Oh! yes," was the reply; but these two little words were spoken in a very skilful manner, and said much.

Had Mrs. Stephenson been rather less warm-hearted and warm-headed, she might have given Sir Henry Seymour the advantage of a little more consideration of probabilities than she did upon hearing this "Oh! yes." But she looked at the great brilliant staring beauty opposite to her, and remembering the pale unobtrusive loveliness of Elizabeth, permitted herself to tingle to the fingers' ends with indignation, while she received the impression that the man whom she had fixed upon in her heart for her nephew, was adoring the meretricious goddess instead of the genuine angel.

If not reasonable enough to acquit him, however, she soon recovered sufficient discretion to conceal what she felt, and consoled herself with the belief that she should still be in time to give such a caution to her sister Agnes, as might check the present intimate intercourse between the young people, before it had gone far enough to compromise the happiness of her dearly beloved, and greatly admired niece.

Notwithstanding Mrs. Stephenson's quickly awakened caution, the well-contented Mrs. O'Donagough saw that she had made an impression; and skilfully passed on to other themes, not having any wish or intention of fixing the imputation which she had suggested at all more deeply than might suffice to plague

the faithless Sir Henry a little, and add a feather to her daughter's coronet of conquests, without committing herself by any positive assertions.

"I suppose you don't plague yourself about going to court now, Mr. Willoughby? it's a dreadful bore, isn't it? But that's one of the troubles which having a daughter to bring out occasions!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, with a sigh; then turning abruptly to Mrs. Stephenson, she added, "When is Elizabeth Hubert to be presented?"

It is probable that this question, preceded as it was by the hint of Mrs. O'Donagough's own intentions, might not have received a very direct answer, had it not been that the fair lady to whom it was addressed was entirely lost in reverie, and quite unconscious of everything that had been said since Mrs. O'Donagough's insidious "Oh! yes," had entered her ears. Without any hesitation, therefore, she replied, with a slight start from the suddenness of the address, "At the next drawing-room."

"Well, Patty, we must not indulge to-day in a long gossip with your good uncle; we must be off, dear, or positively we shall not get through what we have to do; Lady Susan always keeps me such an age! Adieu! brother Willoughby! Come and see us, there's a good man—it will do you a vast deal of good, depend upon it. Changing the air is always good for an invalid; and most certainly you can hardly have a greater change than from this little bit of a room to our suite of drawing-rooms in Curzon-street. Good morning, Mrs. Stephenson; of course I shall be vastly happy to see you, if you choose to call. Ceremony between such very near connections is quite ridiculous. Good morning."

Mrs. Stephenson was lost in astonishment, Mr. Willoughby in delight, at the prodigious change which unknown circumstances had wrought in the style and manners of Mrs. O'Donagough.

"What in the world does all this mean, papa?" exclaimed the still pretty Nora, as soon as the door was closed upon her. "She has ceased to hug you, does not appear to retain the slightest awe of me, and both herself and her Brobdignag beauty are dressed *à peindre*, that is to say, their dresses are perfect. But unfortunately for such folks, there is no *Madame* anything who has taken out a patent for disclosing the secret of putting them on. Thank heaven! that is a power still exclusively reserved *à nous autres*, and not all the Reform Bills in the world can take it from us."

"Dearest Nora! that is all very true, I believe," said her father, rousing himself from the agitation occasioned by the sudden apparition of Mrs. O'Donagough, and profusely steeping his handkerchief in *eau de Cologne*; "but what are the peculiarities of dress, compared to those of manner? I do as-

sure you, my dear, that I have the very greatest desire to be kind and cordial to all with whom I became connected by my first marriage. I have very particular reasons for wishing it. But this good Mrs. O'Donagough's manner used to be—— however, there is no occasion to say anything more about that now; I am very thankful, Nora, very thankful, indeed, that it is quite changed. I really hope, my dear, from their dress and appearance altogether, that some considerable fortune has come to them. It must be on the husband's side, for I am pretty sure there was no chance of such a thing on hers. Mrs. Elizabeth Compton certainly is a woman of good fortune—but I think I have understood——"

"Oh! yes, papa; Mrs. Elizabeth Compton's fortune is disposed of elsewhere; none of the satins and laces come from her—I am really dying with curiosity to find out what it all means. By your leave, cher papa! I will ring the bell. I must positively make a few inquiries. Be so good as to send my page up stairs," was the order given when a servant answered the bell.

"Ah ça, Achille? Vous avez des yeux, mon enfant. Dites-moi un peu quelle sorte d'equipage était-il qui vient de partir?"

"Superbe, Madame."

"Et les gens? les chevaux?"

"Superbes, Madame; tout était superbe—parfaitement bien monté."

"C'est bon. Va-t-en."

"Now is not this most extraordinary, papa? Do you remember Mrs. O'Donagough's style of trotting about Brighton? Oh! you must—for how often did she make you trot with her? And you hear what her present style is! Is it not mysterious?"

"No, my dear; not if Mr. O'Donagough has got a fortune left him."

"That is true, certainly; and yet, in all cases of that kind, one is pretty sure to hear of the fortune first, and see the effect of it afterwards."

"That makes no great difference, Nora. They could not spend all this money if they had not got it; and I am certain nobody can feel more inclined to rejoice at their good fortune than I do."

"Did you observe what she said about Sir Henry Seymour, papa?"

"Not very much, Nora; I was really selfish enough to be thinking of myself, and of the great comfort of her being more quiet in her manners," replied the gentle Mr. Willoughby.

"I shall visit her, papa, I am quite determined upon it."

"Do, my dear; it will be very good-natured of you."

"Perhaps not quite that," said Mrs. Stephenson laughing; "nevertheless, my motive is not a bad one either—I cannot

comprehend the thing at all—Seymour, of all men in the world! I must throw some light upon all this, papa, and I know not any mode of doing this, so effectual, as introducing my own radiant presence into the scene of action."

"If there be a mystery, Nora," replied her father, "I certainly can name no better investigator than yourself; but I suspect you will find none. My good sister-in-law has by some means or other grown rich, and this, somehow or other, has rendered her less affectionate, or, at any rate, less demonstrative.

"I do not think I should mind asking her to dinner now, if you and Agnes will arrange it all for me."

"Very well, papa; *nous verrons*. And now, good bye; I have a thousand things to think about and to do."

* * * * *

So had Mrs. O'Donagough. On re-entering her carriage she seated herself with an energy of descent that severely tried the temper of the springs, and set the two Miss Perkinses swinging. "I have got *that much* out of her, at any rate, Patty, haven't I, my dear?" said she, dismissing her extra chin, and recovering her voice.

"About Miss Elizabeth's going to court, mamma? Yes, I did want to get at that, and now we have it, safe and sure," replied Patty, joyously. "I must say I *shall* enjoy going the same day that she does. She is such a quiz of a girl! and oh! so proud and stiff, Matilda! I am sure she would make you both sick if you could see her; she is ten times worse than she was at Brighton."

"The Lord forbid, Patty! for see her they shall, you may depend upon that. Upon my life, girls, she has no more colour than my pocket handkerchief, and though I won't pretend to say that her features are bad, I give you my honour that she's no more to be compared to Patty, than chalk to cheese. But here we are, girls—out with ye all! this is the court-dress maker's, and now you shall see if I don't make Donny's shiners gallop: he told me to spare nothing in our court-dresses, and I don't intend it. Dear Lady Susan! what should we do without her! I promised I would send her a plume exactly the same as my own—and that shall be one of the handsomest that ever was seen at St. James's. She deserves it, dear kind soul! for if she had not offered to present us I should have had to ask some of my own nasty stiff-backed relations; and, after all, you know, there is not one of them that is the daughter of an earl. She shall have her feathers, dear old soul! she may depend upon it, and her table too, every night if she likes it, with her own stakes and her own party."

This grateful effusion was confidentially uttered in the ear of Miss Louisa Perkins (now promoted to the regular, but by no means sinecure place of Mrs. O'Donagough's toady) as they

walked together up the stairs which led to Madame Bonéton's splendid show-rooms.

"Oh! what a sight! did you ever!" exclaimed Patty, as she entered this fairy-land of woman's wishes, and of woman's dreams, embodied and tangible.

"Dear me! how beautiful!" cried Miss Louisa.

"Oh! goodness! how lovely!" sighed Miss Matilda.

"Can you fancy any woman looking quite ugly in that angelic bonnet?" demanded Patty.

"Let me see Madame Bonéton herself," commanded Mrs. O'Donagough.

These last words were not spoken in a tone to be neglected, not to mention that the elegant young lady who replied to them had seen the splendid equipage from which the speaker descended.

"Madame will be here immediately," said the elegant young lady. "She is at this moment engaged with the Duchess of Liddesdale respecting her only daughter, the beautiful Lady Isabella's presentation dress. But she must have nearly finished, for they have been here a long time."

"Isn't it lucky, Louisa?" whispered Mrs. O'Donagough; "now we shall be able to find out exactly the right thing. One beautiful only daughter going to be presented, especially as she seems to be of suitable rank, may safely serve as a pattern for another. Let us sit down here, Louisa, while we wait. Isn't it all lovely?"

"Lovely indeed!" responded Miss Louisa.

"To be sure I do sometimes think," said Mrs. O'Donagough with a fulness of satisfaction which for the moment banished all reserve, and made her almost think aloud, "I do sometimes think, Louisa, that great abilities, thorough real cleverness I mean, is a better fortune for a girl, that is supposing she is tolerably well-looking, than almost any money in the world. You know I open my heart to you about everything, and therefore I don't mind telling you that my father and mother, notwithstanding their high birth, and great gentility, had no more right to expect that I should ever be in such a place as this, ordering court-dresses for myself and my daughter, than you have to be queen of England. Oh! dear!—how well I remember going shopping in our little town, where my father was the rector. It was a very fine living, and a magnificent parsonage-house; but I do so well remember my contrivances to get handsome ball-dresses for myself and my sister Sophy—ha! ha! ha!—I can't contrive to make you exactly understand all about it, but to be sure I have managed, from that time to this, to get on monstrous well."

A movement in an inner room, and then the stately march of three ladies out of it, followed by Madame Bonéton, announced that the consultation was broken up; and in another

minute, the elegant young lady having whispered something in the ear of the imperial-looking mistress of the establishment, Mrs. O'Donagough's highest state of felicity began, by seeing that august personage approach her, and hearing the enticing words, "What may I have the honour of showing you, ma'am?"

"I wish to see whatever you have of the very best and highest style, by way of court-dress. Presentation dresses—that is, I mean, for my daughter; of course I do not mean that *I* have never been presented—that *would* be a good joke, Louisa, wouldn't it? But nevertheless I wish that my own dress should be superb, and that of my daughter something nearly equal to it. By the way, what did the Duchess of Liddesdale order for Lady Isabella?"

This was said in Mrs. O'Donagough's best manner, and if overheard by her husband would unquestionably have won from him the cordial exclamation of "Well done, my Barnaby!" Its effect on Madame Bonéton was just what she intended.

"You know her grace, madam?"

"We meet at every party throughout the season, but I won't tell you that we are great friends, which I dare say you saw as she passed. But the fact is, my daughter has stood in the way of Lady Isabella more than once, and the foolish duchess cannot forgive it. I don't care a straw for that, however, it only piques me to keep up the rivalship. I often say that the duchess's jealousy of my daughter will make the fortune of my dressmakers. What has been ordered? you must positively tell me, Madame Bonéton, what has been ordered to-day for Lady Isabella?"

Madame Bonéton was almost as clever a woman as Mrs. Barnaby, and immediately gave such a description of the noble young lady's dress as enabled her to dispose of various articles for which she was rather particularly anxious to obtain a sale, and the business ended by a dress being ordered for Miss Patty, and for her mamma likewise, both of which were ingeniously contrived in such a manner as to accommodate more embroidery, more flowers, more fringe, more tassels, more spangles, and more lace, than any two dresses ever carried before into a royal presence.

It would be too difficult to describe justly the swelling joy, the broadly-smiling contentment, the swimming ecstasy of Mrs. O'Donagough, as she made her last *congé* to Madame Bonéton, for any wise pen to attempt it. She hardly felt the ground beneath her feet as she descended to her carriage, though had the ground beneath her feet been sentient, the unconsciousness could not have been reciprocal, for not only did the high consciousness of what she had been about dilate her majestic person to the eye, but it gave a firmness to her tread which might have rivalled the sublime march of an elephant.

"Let this plume of feathers follow me to my carriage," she said; "I mean it as a present to a friend, and will leave it as I

go home; remember that every direction I have given be accurately followed. The slightest inaccuracy will be remarked; and as expense is no object, let every article be perfect, absolutely perfect in its kind."

The two Miss Perkinses, intimate as they were with Mrs. O'Donagough, had never seen her at anything like this degree of elevation before; there was a sort of sublime excitement in all her looks and words that almost made them tremble, and which, added to the orders they had heard her give, made them follow her down stairs, with feelings of veneration almost too profound to be pleasant. Even Patty herself was perhaps a little astonished, but she had too much inherited firmness of spirit to be overwhelmed by it.

"Isn't mamma a first-rate thorough-goer?" she said to her friend Matilda, while waiting for Mrs. O'Donagough's not very easy introduction of herself into her carriage. "How she has wriggled papa out of his stingy ways, to be sure!"

Between the dwelling of Mrs. Bonéton, which was in St. James's-street, to that of Lady Susan Deerwell, which was situated in Green-street, Grosvenor-square, Mrs. O'Donagough never uttered a word; it is probable that her feelings were too big for utterance. When the servant's inquiry for her ladyship was answered by the single word "Yes," Mrs. O'Donagough broke this expressive silence by earnestly ejaculating "Thank God!" and having, as usual on all visiting occasions, told the dear Perkinses to sit still and amuse themselves till she came back, she proceeded, followed by Patty and the plume, up the narrow staircase, to the dirty little drawing-room of her noble friend.

Lady Susan was sitting, as was her wont, in an old-fashioned shabby-looking arm-chair, which, like all the rest of her furniture, had more of that sort of antiquity about it which results from long and constant use, than from the well-preserved, or well-imitated stateliness of the *renaissance*. Her ladyship's cap was of exceedingly dirty blonde, and her ladyship's gown of exceedingly long-worn satin. A cat, in better case than anything else in the apartment, was seated in a chair opposite to her, while on a perch close by it, all natural hostility between the parties appearing to be extinguished, screamed a magnificent cockatoo. The note of welcome uttered by this amiable creature rendered all other greetings for some time inaudible, but at length it betook itself to silently nodding its head, and then her ladyship was heard to say, "Never mind, never mind the bird. There, sit down, sit down both of you, but don't disturb the cat. Take that chair, my girl, that one out there; I can't have my cat disturbed."

"How are you, my dearest Lady Susan?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, in an accent of deferential affection; "is that

abominable rheumatism that tormented you so last night, more quiet to-day?"

"I don't know, I am sure, anything about it just now, for I've been busy—I've been making out my card account for the last month. But I tell you what, Mrs. O'Donagough, the tea you gave me last night was most abominable—so weak, I mean. You must recollect, if you please, that if I come to your house to play cards, I do it out of pure kindness, of course, to give a good style to your rooms, you know—but then I must have tea that will keep me awake, remember. I positively will not play without it."

"To be sure not, my dearest Lady Susan! Good heaven! of course! I am so very much obliged to you for naming it! it's so like you! such kindness! so very friendly! I am sure I can never thank you enough!"

This series of exclamations acted much as her ladyship's own hand did upon the back of her ladyship's own cat, which, jealous it may be, of the near and passing approach of the visitor, was come to look after her own interest, and now sat in the venerable spinster's lap. In short, Mrs. O'Donagough's gentle touches so far rubbed down the temper of the old lady, that she said with rather unusual civility, "Well! and what do you come for now?"

"Give me that box, Patty!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, without making any direct reply. "Here, my dearest Lady Susan, is the real object of my coming. May I flatter myself that these feathers suit your taste?"

"They are well enough for feathers," replied the noble, but very sour-looking maiden; "but it is quite nonsense, and out of the question, if you suppose I can stick them on by way of a head-dress to go to court. That may do all very well for a young girl, like your blowsy miss there, with a cart-load of curls on her head, but you know well enough it won't do for me; I must have a cap to wear with them, if they are to be of any use."

"Of course, my dearest Lady Susan, I never dreamt of anything else; but as I observed to Patty, as we drove along to Madame Bonéton's, it would not do at all for me to take the liberty of buying your ladyship a cap, till your ladyship had been kind enough to tell me what sort of one your ladyship would like."

"Why, for that matter, there's no such great variety, Mrs. O'Donagough. The only question is between Brussels point and blonde, and I like the Brussels point best."

"And Brussels point it shall be, my dearest Lady Susan. And now about the day, you know. The next drawing-room is fixed, Madame Bonéton tells me, for the 29th—I hope that will suit your ladyship?"

"Suit? humph! I can't very well say it *suits* me Mrs. O'Donagough, for the plain truth is, I have got no suit at all.

It's years and years since I last went to court, and I thought you knew that I should never have dreamed of going now, with no earthly motive but just to present you and your daughter. I should never have dreamed of going, if you had not promised that I should have no trouble at all about it, and what's more, I won't neither. Really I have no notion of it, it is quite too bad."

"My dearest Lady Susan!" began the frightened Mrs. O'Donagough, "you have only to say exactly what you want and wish, and Madame Bonéton shall send it in without your having the least trouble in the world. Will your ladyship have the great kindness to give me a little list of everything you would like to have, and I will see to it, without giving your ladyship the least atom of trouble in the world"?

"There is no need of a list, Mrs. O'Donagough," replied the old lady, taking a long pinch of snuff; "I only want a proper dress to go to court in. The train must be black velvet, and the petticoat satin; I don't care twopence about the colour. Only don't forget the gloves and shoes, you know."

"I will forget nothing, dearest Lady Susan! You will go with us, then, on the 29th?"

"Yes, if all my things are sent in properly, without my having any trouble about it, I will."

"*Good* morning, then, dearest Lady Susan! I will take care that everything shall be right. *Good* morning."

"Take the plume back with you, for mercy's sake. I can't think how you could be so thoughtless! How do you suppose my old Alice would like to have the plague of fastening it in?"

"To be sure! what a fool I am! so very thoughtless! Take the box again, Patty,—*Good* morning, dearest Lady Susan!"

"Good bye. There, that will do—I hate shaking hands. Take care that I get some good tea this evening, Mrs. O'Donagough; don't go and forget that."

"Depend upon it, dearest Lady Susan! depend upon it;" and with these words Mrs. O'Donagough at length tore herself from her most valued friend.

"To be sure nothing ever was more kind and flattering than dear Lady Susan Deerwell's behaviour to Patty and me. People may call it illiberal, or affected if they will, but I do like the nobility, and it is no good to deny it," said Mrs. O'Donagough as soon as she was re-seated in her carriage; and she then added, "I hope you won't be tired with a little more driving—you two I mean, Louisa and Matilda—for you will have to get home to Brompton, you know; but I really must go down to Madame Bonéton's again."

Her obsequious friends, of course, assured her that the greatest pleasure they *could* have was to go about with her. On again reaching the portico of this votary-thronged temple of fashion, Mrs. O'Donagough, in her usual unceremonious

manner of settling all things in which the dear, good Perkinses were concerned, proclaimed that she did not wish them again to enter it with her, and taking Patty, with the footman and the box, mounted to the shrine, before which the priestesses were still performing their respective offices. The most exact and satisfactory orders were then given respecting the court-dress of Lady Susan Deerwell; with a hint, in conclusion, that her ladyship did not wish her ladyship's bill to be be sent in to her ladyship till Christmas, at which season her ladyship always settled all her ladyship's accounts.

"Good gracious, mamma!" whispered Patty, as they descended the stairs, "how frightened the old woman will be when the bill is sent in; I thought you were going to make her a present of it all, and I am sure she thought so too."

"I dare say she did, my dear," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, "and I had my suspicions that you might fall into the same mistake, and it was just for that reason that I made you come up, and left the Perkinses in the carriage, because I hope it will be a useful lesson to you, Patty. When people have a great object in view, my dear, and your papa says our going to court is a very great object, they should always make use of every means in their power to bring it about. But when it is done, Patty, they of course owe it to themselves to take care that the sacrifices they have made to obtain it should become as little injurious to them as possible. This is the principle upon which I have just acted, and you may depend upon it, my dear child, that without firm and steadfast principles of action, no one will ever get honourably and prosperously through life."

"That's all very well, mamma," replied Patty; "but I'll bet you five pounds the old lady will never speak to you again after she finds out the trick you have played her."

"Well, my dear," returned her mother, with great dignity and composure, "and what difference will it make to me whether she does or no? I choose to have a person of title to introduce me at St. James's: to obtain this, I submit to endure considerable annoyance, and to suffer many inconveniences. Good—I ought to do this; I should be unwise if I did not. But the object once obtained, should I be wise to submit still to these annoyances? No, Patty; what was wise before, would be folly after, and render me totally unworthy of the confidence your father reposes in me. Remember all this, my dear girl, and always act, as much as possible, in conformity to my example."

At this moment Mrs. O'Donagough's carriage, which had been obliged to make way for another, recovered its place before the door, and the mother and daughter entered it, the happier, and the better, for the delay; for the young lady felt that she had listened to what might be very useful to her, one day or other, while the elder one enjoyed the most delightful satisfaction

that can warm a parent's heart—namely, the consciousness of having established an excellent principle in the breast of a child.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

Two of the most exciting events that her greatly-varied life had given rise to, were at this time rapidly approaching Mrs. O'Donagough. The first was being presented, together with her young daughter, at the court of her sovereign; the other, the giving her first ball at home.

After a very long deliberation, it was decided that both these momentous events should take place on one and the same day. There were some reasons against this arrangement, but there were more for it; and moreover, of the latter number were the two overpowering facts, first, that, with the exception of the train, the whole court dress might be worn by both ladies at the ball, and secondly, that having assembled together everybody they knew, no other opportunity would be so favourable for making the important circumstance of their presentation generally known.

This point once settled, the whole body and soul of Mrs. O'Donagough were offered up with a sort of desperate intensity to the business of preparation. Far different indeed, and triumphantly did she remember the difference, were her preparations now, from what they had been the last time she anticipated the pleasure of seeing her "*own relations*," as she ever described both families of Stephensons, as well as General Hubert's. Perhaps the only point of resemblance was, that the "dear good Perkinses" were aiding and assisting at both; and here there certainly was no change,—for at Brighton they had devoted themselves wholly and solely to do Mrs. O'Donagough's will and pleasure, and so they did now. Miss Matilda, indeed, was no longer the same animated creature she was then, for she had, ever since the unhappy affair of Mr. Foxcroft, entirely changed her style of dress, and her tone of manners. Instead of pale pink ribbons, and variegated wreaths of roses and geraniums, she now confined herself wholly to white muslin, and the dark, but gracious decoration of *la fleur des veuves*. Her style of conversation, and, indeed, her whole deportment, had undergone a change equally remarkable. She sighed a great deal, and very seldom laughed, and though it is possible that in her *tête-à-tête* intercourse with her ever-faithful Patty, some traces of her former gay disposition might recur, she had decidedly assumed to the eyes of all others that most interesting character, a disappointed young lady. Her first meeting with Mr. Foxcroft had been a little awkward, but the gentleman, *ayant pris sa partie*, exhibited so little consciousness that anything particular had ever passed between them, that at

length the two Miss Perkinses made up their minds not to care a farthing about it either; and had it not been that Miss Matilda had a little prematurely communicated to most of her friends and acquaintance the probability of her soon changing her name, the white dress and *la fleur des veuves* might have been altogether omitted. Perhaps, however, it was better that things should be as they were. The white gowns, and *la fleur des veuves*, produced together a sort of transition state, from which it was much easier for Miss Matilda to emerge again into the bright light of love and hope, than it would have been had their picturesque and gentle sadness never been assumed. Mrs. O'Donagough's ball appeared extremely likely to restore the fair mourner to rainbow tints and frolic smiles, if anything could; and in fact, after a few days of doubtful gladness, during which she had listened almost in silence to Patty's joyous anticipations of this day of days, her spirit yielded itself to the delicious impulse of reviving hope, and upon her young friend's exclaiming, "We'll waltz till five in the morning, Matilda! see if we won't," the mists of disappointed tenderness dispersed, like a cloud before the sun, and, phœnix-like, she rose from the ashes of the flame which had so nearly consumed her.

When the master of a house says, "I wish you to invite everybody you know, and that no expense be spared to make the thing go off well," the *thing*, let it be ball, rout, fête, champêtre, or what not, is pretty sure, even in the hands of an ordinary female, to be a very dashing affair. What, then, was it likely to become in those of Mrs. O'Donagough? Time presses, and paper wanes, or whole pages might be filled in a very useful and interesting manner, by describing all the superb devices to which that high-spirited and tasteful lady had recourse in order to make her ball outshine all other balls. Mr. O'Donagough witnessed all this, but breathed not a single restraining syllable; indeed, it was quite evident that his object was to make a great display, and though his mind was a good deal occupied by affairs of a private nature, he from time to time found leisure to exclaim in the most encouraging tone, "Well done, my Barnaby!" On two points only did he offer any observation that could be construed into interference: the first was concerning the third drawing-room, which he informed her must be kept altogether sacred to the four or five card-tables which by great ingenuity it was made to accommodate: the second was concerning the champagne. "I will take care," he said, "that it shall all be of a proper quality; but you must remember that a few dozens, which I shall set apart, and mark with a cross, are kept exclusively for the card-room. And you must remember, likewise, my Barnaby, that Richardson, the waiter, you know, that I have hired occasionally for that room, must not be called away for anything

else; I will give him his orders as to the manner in which he is to wait upon us. And now, my dear, I shall trouble you with no further instructions; attend to these, and I will venture to predict that everything will go well, and perfectly to my satisfaction. I have already told you that the longer the dancing is kept up the better, and with Patty's charming spirits, and yours, my dear, there will be no difficulty about that."

"None at all, Donny, dear; never you fear about that," replied his thrice-happy wife; "and as for the other things, you may depend upon it I will do my best. About Richardson, and the wine, and all that, of course there will be no difficulty, because you will give him your own orders, and he's a fellow that understands at half a word. But about keeping this third room sacred, as you call it, I am afraid that won't be quite so easy, for you know, Donny, that when the other rooms are full, people will be running in here for air, and for the comfort of the sofas in that beautiful recess, and I am sure I do not know how I shall prevent them."

"Never mind, then, my dear; I'll manage all that myself. I won't have any candles lighted up in the recess, as there generally are; and then, as it is such an out-of-the-way corner, nobody will be likely to get to it. I know, however, as well as you do, that the room is sure to be full, particularly at the beginning of the evening; but that will be of no great consequence if you will take care to collect all the loiterers when you go down to supper. If we get too busy to relish further interruption, it will be easy enough to shut the doors while you are at supper, and lock them, too, if it was necessary; of course, if any observation was made, you would just mention that the gentlemen are at supper."

Mr. O'Donagough knew his admirable wife too well to think that after this short colloquy there would be any occasion to say more. From that time his happy Barnaby had the delight of proceeding with her preparations unchecked and uninterrupted by a single observation from him.

Some speculative people may, perhaps, suspect that, among Mrs. O'Donagough's widely-spread invitations, some might fail of their effect, and that she would have to sustain "many disappointments;" but all such are completely mistaken. The reasons which "all the world," with wonderfully few exceptions, find for accepting an invitation to a ball known to be given on a large and handsome scale, are more various than "all the world" is itself aware of; whereas the effective objections to it, if the virtue of the fair inviter has never been impugned, and a few people of fashion are known to be expected, are few indeed.

As to Mrs. O'Donagough, though by no means of a doubting or timid temper, she herself hardly dared to anticipate the success which attended her. For some excellently good

reason or other, almost everybody she had ventured to invite chose to come, and what with friends, and friends' friends, her list of acceptances far exceeded her hopes.

So actively and admirably had this highly-gifted lady managed her affairs, that when the morning of the 29th arrived, she found herself perfectly at leisure to indulge in a most luxuriantly long toilet in preparation for her appearance at St. James's. The woman who, as all well-informed persons know, even at the very outset of her career, had so well understood what the habits of people of fashion required, as to provide herself with a Betty Jacks, was not likely, in this full-blown and prosperous period of her existence, to want a lady's maid perfectly accomplished in her profession. Mrs. O'Donagough was happy enough to have attached such a one to her service, and by half-past eleven o'clock the two dear good Miss Perkinses, and Mrs. Bumpford (the Abigail) stood beside the bed, the sofa, and the chairs of Mrs. O'Donagough's apartment, very nearly "in act to" worship the gorgeous paraphernalia thereupon displayed.

Fortunately, the bedroom of Patty was close beside, or rather close behind, that of her mamma, and thus the adoration, the sweet commotion, and, in a word, the whole operation of dressing, went on in the two rooms as if they had been but one.

To any person who loved the study of natural history, it would have been pleasing to see how prettily the generic features of the mother and her offspring displayed themselves. There was precisely the same movement of the different muscles, as the different causes of activity presented themselves. The nerves, and, indeed, each distinctive faculty, seemed moved by the self-same spring; and one might, almost, have persuaded one's self that the existences of mother and child were one, so perfect was the

Union in partition

which they exhibited.

By degrees, however, the absorbing interests of each separate mirror compelled them to cease the delicious intercourse between room and room, with which the business had opened. Miss Louisa became fixed where she could gaze at and applaud Mrs. O'Donagough; Miss Matilda became fixed where she could gaze at and applaud Patty; while the almost omnipresent Bumpford glided from room to room, with rapture on her lips and pins between her teeth, till, one by one, every costly article of the multitudinous toilet was adjusted.

"Now, ma'am," said the ladies' maid, "I do think that everything is quite perfect. And, to be sure, I never did, in all my experience, see any ladies look so glorious in court-dresses as you and Miss Patty. Isn't it true, ladies?" she continued, turning to the two faithful Miss Perkinses, who had never permitted an eye to wander during the whole process, "isn't it

true? Did you ever see anything so noble as my mistress? What a presence! I shall wonder if the Queen, and all the lords and ladies, don't pay particular attention to her. How the plume sits, ma'am, don't it? And then the spread of the petticoat, showing off so beautiful the embroidery and the bunches of flowers! I would not live with a lady as didn't go to court, if they would double my wages."

"I wish, Bumpford, you would just see if you can't tighten my body the least bit in the world; I look rather larger than I ought to do, don't I, Matilda, about the small of the waist?"

"Oh! Patty, you are perfect!" exclaimed her enthusiastic friend, with hands clasped, and shoulders elevated, as "others use, who sport with" the plastic feelings of young ladies under similar circumstances.

"Very well, then," returned Patty quietly, and for the moment, at least, perfectly satisfied—"very well, then, Bumpford; perhaps you had better let well alone. Of course I don't want to be pinched any more, if I can help it—I know that I can hardly draw my breath as it is."

"Nonsense, Patty!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, indignantly; "for mercy's sake, don't speak so like a vulgar housemaid. How do other ladies draw their breath, I should like to know?"

"Don't you talk, mamma; I am sure it is quite impossible you can be tight-laced, such an enormous size as you are."

"Oh! my dear Miss Patty! how can you say such a word?" cried Miss Perkins; "there is something so noble in your mamma's look, that I am sure it would be all the pities in the world to alter it."

"Lord bless me, Louisa! you need not fly out so," responded Patty; "who told you that I wanted to alter anything? You had much better mind your own business, and not try to set mamma against me."

"Hold your tongue, Patty," said Mrs. O'Donagough, too happy to be angry at anything; "you never looked so well in your life. I should like nothing better than just to see Miss Elizabeth Hubert stand side by side with you, to-day; she is no more to be compared to Patty, than the sun to the moon—is she?"

The good humour of Patty thus judiciously restored, the four ladies descended to the drawing-room, where the thoughtful Mrs. O'Donagough had ordered biscuit and wine to be placed, to beguile the few last moments before the clock announced that they might set out for the dwelling of Lady Susan.

Like all other ladies who know what they are about, Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter had been refreshed by a basin of soup during the progress of their dressing; nevertheless they both felt "thankful," as Mrs. O'Donagough expressed it, "for a good glass of wine." And a good, or at any rate, a full glass

of wine she took, and another after it, as she remembered how overpowering it must be to find one's self face to face with the Queen; and then, as she stood with the open decanter in her liberal hand, urging the spinster sisters to take another glass, she once more replenished her own for the sake of saying, with becoming unction, "Well, Patty! here is good luck to us!"

The few last moments of all were given to admiration of the drawing-rooms, prepared as they were for the festivities of the evening, and then the mother, drawing herself up before one pier-glass, and the daughter before the other, they awaited, with beating hearts, and radiant eyes, the arrival of their equipage.

"Here it comes! mercy on me! I almost wish it was over! Just shake out my train once more, Bumpford: come along, Patty. Take care of yourselves, girls! I am glad we settled that you should stay all day, and dress here, for I know I shall be dying when I come back to tell you all about it. Now then!"

And in another minute, the mother and daughter, placed opposite to each other, that each might gaze upon each, were on their way to Lady Susan Deerwell's. The old lady made herself to be waited for so long, that Mrs. O'Donagough's wrath out-blazed her rouge, and, together with her three glasses of wine, caused a redness of the nose, that by no means tended to tranquillise the florid tone of her general appearance. At length the tall pale figure of Lady Susan, perfectly well-dressed, but having discarded whatever needless decoration Madame Bonéton had bestowed upon her, entered the carriage, offering so remarkable a contrast to the two figures already in possession of it, that each of the three became aware of it. Their silent observations ran thus—

"What a quaker-like object!" thought Mrs. O'Donagough. "It is well Patty and I have some style about us, or the whole party would be passed over as horrid hum-drums."

"Oh! the hideous old stick!" thought Miss Patty; "but she is no bad contrast, though, to such a girl as me."

"Mercy on me! how shall I ever stand this!" thought the noble spinster. "I have the greatest mind in the world not to go now."

But, happily for the *débutantes*, her ladyship recollected that if she did *not* go, she should not only have to pay for her own dress, but be obliged to give up the high play in which her soul delighted, or at least to abandon one of the most commodious scenes for it that she had ever enjoyed. So she looked at her two companions and smiled, without uttering a single word of salutation, good, bad, or indifferent.

"Good morning, dearest Lady Susan!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, perfectly sure that her ladyship's silence proceeded from envy and mortification at the splendid appearance of herself and her daughter; "I hope we have not hurried you?"

"I wish we had settled to go an hour earlier," replied the old lady, perusing the figures of her companions from top to toe; "however, I flatter myself the crowd will be very great."

This was literally thinking aloud, and might have puzzled any one who had listened to it, but *that* Mrs. O'Donagough did not, having caught sight of some passing plumes almost as umbrageous as her own, and becoming from that moment too intent upon peeping into every carriage passed, or passing, to have any distinct consciousness of what was said in her own.

The crowd at St. James's was as great as her ladyship could possibly desire, and it was not without difficulty that the three ladies made their way up stairs, and into the presence-chamber. By the time they had achieved this, the senses of Mrs. O'Donagough were so completely bewildered, that she knew not what was said to her, which way to turn, or what to do. On reaching the top of the stairs, her first movement was to seize upon the arm of Lady Susan, but this did not answer, for the wily old lady felt that if she submitted to this, the crowd in which she was glorying would have availed her nothing, and, therefore, without the slightest ceremony she shook off the weighty arm which had seized her, and saying, "Take hold of your daughter's arm, Mrs. O'Donagough, and walk on," she managed to glide forward alone, and perform the duty she had undertaken with as little identification of herself with her *protégées*, as it was well possible to imagine.

But if Lady Susan Deerwell had reason to rejoice in the crowd, Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter had still more; for so completely had they both lost all idea of what they ought to do, and where they ought to go, that but for the impulse from behind, and the occasional repetition of that useful warning, "Go on—go on," it is probable that they would have performed some very extraordinary evolutions indeed.

As it was, however, they reached the royal lady in safety, but so much before they expected it, that Mrs. O'Donagough started with such violence as nearly to extinguish the eyes of the unfortunate individual against whom she retreated. Having, however, recovered her equilibrium and her consciousness, she began to make the most violent desire to pause and look about her a little; and nothing short of the gentle violence applied to her huge elbow could have induced her to pass on.

Finding that no choice was left her, she perforce followed the line that was moving off, and having, by a magnificent tossing round of her lofty head, ascertained that Patty followed, soon reached a point where she found herself at liberty to breathe, look about her, and make herself as conspicuous as possible. Now it was that she found the pleasure which she had promised herself not altogether imaginary. Till this delightful moment, she had been really hurried on in a manner

Mrs O'Donaghugh and Patty create

which had made her almost forget her own magnificence, her daughter's beauty, and the delight of exhibiting both in such a presence. But now she awakened again to a delicious consciousness of it all, and every inch of her seemed to become instinct with lofty thoughts, and dignified delight.

"Where is Lady Susan, my dear?" she demanded of her staring daughter, in a tone considerably more sonorous than was usually heard from the spot where she stood; "I can see her nowhere! We must stay here, my love, and wait for her."

The blooming Patty, nothing loath, drew up by the side of her mamma, and the two ladies stood together in the most conspicuous place they could contrive to occupy, talking in whispers of all around them, and bringing into action such a variety of

Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,

as speedily made them the object to which every eye within reach was directed.

Not long after they had taken possession of this station, a group approached from the presence-chamber, which, for a moment at least, drew all eyes from Mrs. O'Donagough's geranium velvet train, and flower-and-fringe-bedecked white satin petticoat, nay, even from Patty's pink, and silver, her tassels, and her trumpery, her rouge, and her ringlets, to fix themselves on the very daintiest vision that ever seemed to come direct from Paradise to grace the circle of a mortal's court.

This was a young lady from whose beauteous eyes seventeen summers had scarce sufficed to banish the shy, bright, gazelle-like glance of childhood. There was a look of innocent and delicate timidity in her sweet face that, had need been, would have called around her a body-guard of all the *preux chevaliers* within reach, and yet there was so much of easy grace in every movement of her tall slight person, that one dared not apply the epithet of shy to *her* (though one might to her eyes), lest it should do her the vile wrong of suggesting an idea of awkwardness. Her dress, train and all, was of white satin, the *corsage* being decorated only with pearls, and resembling in form to that most *historique* of fashions in which Vandyke delighted to paint his fair and noble ladies. A narrow bandeau of pearls sufficed to secure the feathers that gracefully drooped over her dark and luxuriant hair, which was parted without ringlets, and gathered into a rich Grecian knot behind.

Had this beautiful girl been seen surrounded by none but graces and nymphs, she would have shone among them like a planet among the lesser stars, and might have challenged not only the court of St. James's, but that of Windsor too, with all its beauties, dead as well as living, without any danger of meeting a rival; but there was something singularly striking in the contrast offered by her peculiarly refined appearance and

that of poor Patty, who chanced at the moment of her appearance to be in possession of all eyes, excepting, indeed, those which were fixed by preference on her mamma. There was a smile on more faces than one, as she advanced, among those who love to mark whimsical contrarieties; but this smile changed to a look of unmixed astonishment when Mrs. O'Donagough was seen to stretch forth her enormous arm, and seize upon the hand of the delicate creature who was winning her way onward through the yielding crowd.

Every one, of necessity, left the presence-chamber in single file; and it was only when thus seized upon that Elizabeth Hubert, for she it was who was thus unluckily encountered, turned round her head to look for her mother. Mrs. Hubert was close behind, and despite the equable composure of mind which she usually displayed, she now coloured deeply, and stepped forward to take the arm of her young daughter, with a sort of maternal instinct, not altogether unlike what a dainty doe might have felt, on seeing her pretty fawn run down by a huge elephant.

"Well! my dear Agnes! if this isn't luck!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, releasing the daughter while she made a step in advance to clutch the mother. "I am monstrous glad to see you, for we have absolutely lost Lady Susan. But I don't mind it at all now that we have met you, for we can all go on together, and then the cousins can look at each other a little, you know; that's what girls love. But what made you dress her so very plain, my dear? I suppose you think it suits her; everything depends upon style, certainly. Patty looks well, don't she?"

While this was uttered, the imprisoned Mrs. Hubert walked onwards without raising her eyes from the ground, and her friends must forgive her if, for once in her life, the quiet, unpretending self-possession of her character gave way before the nervous agitation produced by this encounter. Yet in the midst of it she felt glad, rather than sorry, that General Hubert was not with them; and though really frightened by the loud tone of her aunt's terrible laugh, which she well knew must be bringing all eyes upon them, she struggled to sustain such an appearance of composure under the infliction, as should prevent her from herself becoming a part of the comedy they looked upon. But there was one who, notwithstanding all her efforts to look tranquil, saw that she was suffering, and thereupon, with more zeal than discretion perhaps, pressed forward to rescue her and her blushing daughter from their painful companionship.

"Let Sir Henry inquire for the carriage, mamma!" said Elizabeth, on seeing him approach, and quite forgetting all she had been meditating upon for the last three weeks. Without speaking a word to either party, Sir Henry Seymour wedged himself rather unceremoniously between Mrs. Hubert and her

daughter, silently offering an arm to each, which was as silently accepted. But Mrs. O'Donagough was not to be so dismissed. Keeping fast hold of Agnes, notwithstanding the difficulties offered by the presence of the crowd to an arrangement which placed four persons in a row, she put her other arm behind her, and pulling Patty, who was following closely at her heels, into a situation favourable to the manœuvre, she contrived by a sudden jerk to withdraw Mrs. Hubert's arm from that of Sir Henry, saying at the same time, "Give your other arm to Patty —there's a good fellow; I'll take care of my niece, if you'll look to the girls, Sir Henry."

For a moment the young man forgot his secret, and all the fears connected with it. "Pray take my arm, Mrs. Hubert," he said, without noticing the request of Mrs. O'Donagough, or appearing either to see or feel Patty, whose plumes were in his face—but this imprudence was bitterly repented when his indignant fellow-voyager pronounced the monosyllable "Jack?" in an accent which he perfectly understood, though nobody else did. The effect was magical; Mrs. Hubert's arm was instantly resigned, and his elbow presented to Patty instead. "Will you take my arm, Miss O'Donagough!" he said, in a tone so quiet and subdued, that Elizabeth, who had no notion that the word Mrs. O'Donagough ejaculated had any reference to him, instantly fancied that tenderness towards Patty occasioned this softened tone, and that, although he might probably not have wished to distinguish his *finacée* by any public attention, he could not resist the temptation thus thrown in his way. This confirmation of Lord Mucklebury's intelligence caused her to shudder from head to foot, a very natural consequence of which was, that she withdrew her arm from that of the tortured young man, and making a sudden movement forward, urged her way through the crowd alone.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. O'Donagough!" said Agnes, forcibly withdrawing her imprisoned arm; "but I must beg you to let me follow Elizabeth."

"Oh! by all means, my dear; of course, I shall see you to-night."

These last words, uttered very nearly in Mrs. O'Donagough's loudest key, were at least satisfactorily heard by those around though, if heard, they were unheeded by her to whom they were addressed; for too well did Mrs. Hubert comprehend the feeling which had caused her daughter to drop the arm of Sir Henry; and too anxious was she to be with her, to leave any faculties at leisure wherewith to listen to her terrible aunt.

As Agnes retreated, Mrs. O'Donagough passed behind Patty and Sir Henry, and, possessing herself *sans cérémonie* of the arm which poor Elizabeth had quitted, marched him forward in a position as completely contrasted to that which he had

held a few minutes before as it is possible to imagine—Mrs. Hubert and Elizabeth being upon his arms in the first case, and Mrs. O'Donagough and Patty in the second.

Having thus *by force of arms* compelled the unfortunate Sir Henry Seymour to remain exposed, in this conspicuous condition, to the eyes of half his acquaintance for a longer space than any party ever lingered in the same purlieus before, Mrs. O'Donagough at length prepared to descend the stairs, and, having reached the door of exit, called aloud in her own strong voice for Mrs. O'Donagough's carriage and servants, while from time to time she requested the still firmly-held Sir Henry to call for them also. But though these calls were ably seconded by the officials around, they were all in vain; no servants, no carriage could be found. For the first five or perhaps ten minutes, Mrs. O'Donagough was not displeased with the bustle and the fuss thus occasioned, because she was herself the cause of it; but, by degrees, as the fact became more and more evident that there really was no carriage at all in waiting for her, she ceased to swell from dignity, though nature appeared to be carrying on the same operation within her through the agency of rage. As equipage after equipage drew up for others, while she remained waiting in this desolate condition, the irritation of her feelings caused her repeatedly to run forth almost under the horses' heels, in order to ascertain by ocular demonstration whether it were, indeed, possible that a lady possessing a carriage of her own, with horses, coachman, and footman to boot, could possibly be thus abandoned. These repeated *sorties* had, for the company present, servants included, the twofold advantage—of displaying in the broad light of day her own magnificent figure to the gaze of all, and of rendering Sir Henry's *tête-à-tête* with her daughter almost as remarkable as she could have herself desired.

The poor young man was certainly at his wits' end, and perhaps a little further, for he really felt distracted by the manifold misfortunes which had that morning fallen upon him, and which were not a little aggravated by seeing Sir Edward Stephenson pass by during one of Mrs. O'Donagough's little out-of-door excursions and stare at him and Patty, as they stood *tête-à-tête* and arm-in-arm together in a corner, with a degree of astonishment that seemed to deprive him of the power of speaking, for he passed on without addressing him.

At length, however, after every carriage and every soul belonging to them had been driven away, the long-lost equipage made its appearance; and when Mrs. O'Donagough's vociferous indignation permitted the voices of her servants to be heard, she learnt that they had been employed in the service of Lady Susan Deerwell, who had appeared at the door, sum-

moned them to attend her, and then ordered them to take her home to Green-street.

"Well! that is so like my poor dear Lady Susan!" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, still trembling with rage; "how I will scold her for it! Get in, Patty! Shall I set you down anywhere, Sir Henry?"

"No, I thank you, ma'am," replied the irritated young man, with what seemed to be his last possible effort at concealment of the feelings which had tortured him, and then, slightly touching his hat, he made way for the servant to close the carriage-door, and was out of sight in a moment.

"Ain't I glad she will have her dress to pay for!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough to Patty as the carriage drove off.

"And ain't I glad we plagued that conceited Sir Jack as we did!" responded her lively daughter.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

A LARGE dinner-party assembled at General Hubert's after the drawing-room, chiefly consisting of family connections, most of whom had that morning paid their compliments at St. James's, and all of whom were amongst the guests invited to Mrs. O'Donagough's ball at night.

There had been too much vexation endured by Mrs. Hubert and her daughter in the morning, for either of them willingly to have discussed the cause of it, and if their feelings only had been consulted, the names of Mrs. and Miss O'Donagough would most assuredly never have been mentioned. But Sir Edward Stephenson, who knew nothing of all this, no sooner perceived that the ice-plates were all removed, the grapes duly circulated, and the door closed upon the last of the attendants, than he said, addressing himself to Mrs. Hubert, at whose right hand he was seated, "I have been excessively vexed to-day, my dear Agnes!"

"Indeed? I am very sorry to hear it," she replied; "may I ask the cause of your vexation, Sir Edward?"

"Yes, you may, and I will tell it you frankly. That boy Seymour, whom, notwithstanding all our quarrels, I love as if he were my own son, is most decidedly acting either like a fool or a knave; I cannot tell you half the disappointment and vexation this causes me. I thought him such a noble-hearted fellow, and gave him credit for so intelligent and so refined a mind, that what I have seen to-day has surprised, as much as it has pained me."

"What is that you are saying, Edward, with so very grave a face?" said General Hubert; "I think I heard something about surprise and pain. Is the communication a secret between you and Agnes? I hope nothing has happened seriously to vex you?"

"Yes, but there has, Hubert," replied Sir Edward, in an accent that showed he was very much in earnest; "but the cause of my vexation is very far from being a secret now, and even if it were, there is no sort of probability that it should long continue so. There is not one of us, I believe, who has not the honour of knowing Mrs. and Miss O'Donagough, nor is there one who does not know something, more or less, of my late ward, Sir Henry Seymour; therefore, good friends, you are all fully competent to judge of the degree of pleasure with which I should see Sir Henry bestow himself and his noble fortune on the young lady I have just mentioned."

"Nonsense, Sir Edward!" exclaimed the general, indignantly; "I too have heard this inconceivably silly report, but I really never expected that I should hear it repeated by you."

"Nor would you, Hubert, had I not this day seen what too strongly confirms it, to leave me the same comfortable conviction of its falsehood which I enjoyed this morning. It was Mucklebury who first told me that the infatuated boy had engaged himself to that tremendous-looking Miss O'Donagough, whose very beauty is revolting, and whom I should have thought completely formed to disgust Seymour, instead of captivating him; for which reason I ventured rather cavalierly to assure his lordship that he was mistaken, and even when he gravely repeated that he knew the fact from the very best authority, I still wholly disbelieved it. But you know what the adage says on the article of seeing. It is not on the testimony of Lord Mucklebury, or that of any lord or lady breathing, that I would have believed Henry Seymour capable of such preposterous folly; but when I beheld him this morning marching through the crowd at St. James's, with the inconceivable mother on one arm, and the indescribable daughter on the other, I knew not what to think. For must it not be some feeling greatly approaching madness, which could induce such a man as Sir Henry Seymour to make such an exhibition of himself?"

"It was doubtless extremely simple, and extremely civil of him," replied General Hubert, "but it surely is hardly sufficient to justify your belief that he is going to marry the young lady."

"But that is not the worst of it. Where he had been taking them, or what he had been doing with them, Heaven knows; but it was, I should think, nearly an hour after I had seen the trio pass in the manner I have described, that I at last got down stairs, after having been detained by meeting an old acquaintance from Berlin, whom I had not seen for years, and there, at the bottom of the staircase, in a corner as much as possible out of sight, I found Sir Henry and his fair young friend *tête-à-tête*, long after the great majority of the company had driven off. The girl, too, was hanging on his arm in a sort of familiar way that I cannot bear to think of, because it convinces me that

even if he be not fool enough to think of marrying her, he has been wicked enough to make her believe he does."

"And the difference between the two is hardly worth discussion," said Mrs. Hubert, suddenly rising and giving Lady Stephenson the mystical glance which makes it law that all the ladies present should instantly rise too.

General Hubert looked surprised at this unusually early retreat. "Are you going to leave us already, Agnes?" said he.

"Yes we are, general, by your good leave," she replied. "The morning has been a fatiguing one for Elizabeth, and I really dare not propose leaving her at home this evening, therefore I mean to deposit her upon a sofa till it is necessary to attend Mrs. O'Donagough's festivities."

Whether General Hubert's rapid glance towards his daughter, when these words were spoken, threw any light upon this movement, might have been doubtful to all but his wife; but she perfectly well understood the feeling that led him without any further questionings to open the door for them, and which caused him, as she passed, to snatch her hand, and wring it with strong emotion. Yet Agnes had never, even to him, betrayed her suspicions respecting the feelings of Elizabeth's young heart towards Sir Henry Seymour, nor did he guess them now to their full extent. But he thought he had seen very decided proofs of admiration on the part of the young man towards his daughter; and though he wished a year or two might elapse, and give them time to know each other, before any thought of marriage was alluded to, he had been for some time watching every trait in his character with deep interest, and had begun to contemplate the idea of a near and dear connection with him as an event that he should not only approve, but very cordially rejoice in.

Most distasteful, therefore, was the rumour, which had reached him from more than one quarter, of Sir Henry Seymour's devotion to Miss O'Donagough, and steadfastly did he believe the thing to be impossible, till he saw the effect which the repetition of it produced on his wife. But whatever feelings of vexation and displeasure it might have caused the general to hear such news confirmed, its effect on his wife was much more painful still. She knew, though he did not, that her Elizabeth was no longer "fancy free," and though the conviction of this came too late for any caution on her part to do much good, her anxiety on the subject was lessened, if not altogether removed, by the conviction that the young man was devotedly attached to her, and that he was one to whom she could intrust the happiness of her heart's dearest treasure with confidence. Such being the case, it must be superfluous to state that the report of Sir Henry's attachment to her cousin had been listened to with a very anxious mixture of fear and incredulity; but, improbable as it appeared to her, so many

circumstances had occurred to confirm it, that, when she left the dinner-table, the incredulity had pretty nearly vanished, while the fear was strengthened almost into certainty. Had it not been, however, for Caroline's strange conduct, and subsequent agitation when the subject was named, Mrs. Hubert would still have been inclined to doubt not only the truth of all she had heard, but also the testimony of Sir Edward's eyes. But her imagination could suggest no other interpretation of Miss Seymour's emotion than that her heart revolted from the connection her brother was about to form, though her devoted love for him led her to assume a degree of civility towards the young lady, which was altogether foreign to her feelings. During the few days that the poor girl remained in Berkeley-square, after the visit of Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter, she had appeared so dreadfully embarrassed whenever they were spoken of, that the subject had been dropped by Mrs. Hubert from mere pity; and now that she was gone to visit friends at some distance from London, the recollection of all she had said and all that she seemed ashamed to say, did more to strengthen the report than anything she could have done or said, had she remained with them.

On reaching the hall, Elizabeth took a side candle from the slab, and proceeded with it to her own room; and thither, in a few minutes afterwards, her mother followed.

"You are ill, my dearest child!" said Mrs. Hubert, on perceiving her sitting pale and motionless, while large tears were sadly coursing each other down her cheeks; "my darling Elizabeth! tell me what is passing in your mind! Trust me, sweet love! you will feel the better for it."

"Mamma! how can I tell you what I am unable to explain even to myself? I would not wish to have a secret from you. If I have been weak and foolish, I would rather you knew it than not, dearest mother! but I cannot tell how it has all come about. I did not think that I could have been—no, and I do not think so now—so very weak, so very foolish, so everything that I should most dislike to be, as to fancy myself in love, and that, too, with a person who was loving another all the time! Oh! mother, your daughter ought not to be so vile as that."

"The vileness does not rest with you, my child," replied Mrs. Hubert, with strong emotion. "You believed yourself beloved, and had reason to believe it. But this is a theme on which I feel that I must never dare to speak. With you, Elizabeth, the impression will be soon effaced, believe me it will; you shake your head, but you cannot shake my belief, dearest: I speak with perfect confidence. If you have loved this man, it was because he appeared to you, as he did to me, worthy of your love. Now we find that he is not so, your feelings towards

him will change, and that so completely, as to make you doubt that you ever entertained them."

"That may be. But when shall I forget, mamma, that my forward vanity mistook what I suppose was friendship for his sister's friend, for love? It is not my love for him, but my contempt for myself, that will make me miserable."

"You will see this matter in a different light a little while hence, Elizabeth; and that different light will be the true one. But as yet this is perhaps impossible, and I will not harass your spirits now by disputing about it. Perhaps, dearest, it will be best that you should not go to this detestable ball to-night? There are enough of us assembled here, all desperately bent upon the enterprise, to satisfy the claims of relationship, were she ten times our aunt; indeed, it will be best that you should remain quietly at home."

"It would be a great deal best for my pleasure, mamma; but, unless you insist upon my staying at home, I had rather go."

"There may be much to try your spirits, my dear child, and it is quite clear they are not very strong to-night. Neither you nor I should choose that anything you may chance to feel should be suspected."

"Trust me," said Elizabeth, beseechingly.

"I will trust you, my sweet girl! you shall go or stay, just as you like best at the moment; there is no occasion to decide about it yet. If I were you, dearest, I would lie down. Claridge can easily arrange your hair again."

Elizabeth silently nodded her assent, and, after fondly kissing her pale cheek, her mother left her.

On returning to the drawing-room, Mrs. Hubert found the whole party, consisting of Lady Stephenson, and her sister-in-law Nora, Mrs. Henderson, Elizabeth Peters, and two Miss Nivetts, whom, by some of her skilful manœuvrings, Mrs. O'Donagough had contrived to inscribe on her visiting list, in high, and almost loud debate, concerning the possibility of Sir Henry Seymour's having fallen in love with Miss O'Donagough.

Lady Stephenson gave it as her opinion that all things were possible, but that the thing under discussion was not probable.

Mrs. Henderson observed that, after the scene she had witnessed between Miss Seymour and the O'Donagough ladies, she could entertain no doubt whatever of the truth of the report they had heard, inasmuch as the young lady's conduct was perfectly natural upon that theory, and perfectly unintelligible upon every other.

Miss Peters declared that, though Mrs. O'Donagough *was* her aunt by marriage, she must say that she thought her more likely than any one she ever knew to take in a young man, and make him marry her daughter, whether he would or no.

The two Miss Nivetts both followed on the same side, first

one, and then the other, remarking that nothing occurred so constantly as instances of men being drawn in to marry odious, disagreeable women, and exactly the very sort of people they most disliked, by mere art and good management; and that was the reason, to their certain knowledge, why so many admirable young women remained single, just because they would not condescend to do the same sort of things themselves. As both these young ladies were considerably past thirty, their judgment had naturally much weight; but, notwithstanding this, and all that had preceded it, Mrs. Stephenson scrupled not to raise her silver voice in the glorious minority of one, and to proclaim her positive and complete conviction that, either from knavery and mischief, or from fun and foolery, the report was altogether an invention, having no more foundation in truth than the celebrated error which in ages past had assigned to our humble earth the honoured place of centre to the solar system.

On the appearance of Mrs. Hubert, her opinion was eagerly called for by the whole party; but her answer was more oracular than satisfactory, being summed up in that very safe formula, "Time will show."

An hour or two followed, which were wiled away by coffee and criticism. The court circle, as a matter of course, passed under a general review, and then, for the gratification of Mrs. Henderson and her sister, the only ladies present who had not been that day at St. James's, Mrs. Stephenson entered upon a very graphic description of the dress and appearance of Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter, observing that as all present were either her relations, or her relation's relations, there could be no sort of objection to her speaking with unaffected truth of the general effect produced by them upon all beholders. By this time the gentlemen had joined the party, and many a burst of irresistible laughter from Frederic Stephenson attested his continued enjoyment of his pretty wife's powers of persiflage, though he ceased not to protest all the time that he did not at all approve quizzing the O'Donagoughs, that O'Donagough himself was a capital good fellow, and that he meant to invite them all to dinner, to meet Seymour, very soon.

At length the clock struck twelve.

"The carriages have been waiting a long time, Agnes," said the general, "and, if we intend to go at all, I think we must go now."

The whole party declared themselves to be perfectly ready, but where was Elizabeth?

"Wait for us one moment!" said Mrs. Hubert, as she left the room to inquire how her daughter had decided. It was with a very gentle hand that Agnes opened the bedroom door, for she was not without hopes that she should find her child asleep. "Had she decided upon going," thought she, "we

should have seen her in the drawing-room ere this." But she was mistaken. Elizabeth was seated, fully prepared for the ball, her dress no otherwise differing from that of the morning than by the removal of the train and plume. She was reading, and her beautiful features showed no traces of their recent emotion.

"You mean to go, then, my dear love?" said her mother.

"Yes, mamma! I am quite ready," she replied; and quickly wrapping her shawl about her, she set forth upon an expedition which any one, who could have known what was passing in her heart, must have allowed required more courage than the mounting many a "deadly breach" has done.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

THOUGH, for some cause, which it is reasonable to suppose was originated by the retiring timidity of his nature, Mr. O'Donagough did not himself go to court, he was nevertheless exceedingly anxious to receive a full and true description of all that had befallen his lady and their daughter there, and accordingly was in waiting, together with the Misses Perkins, to receive them on their return. "Where the deuce have you been staying all this time?" demanded Mr. O'Donagough the instant his wife's portly person was within the library door. For in that sanctum, the only spot uninvaded by preparations for the ball, were the party to dine, and, with the exception of the dear interval of dressing, recreate themselves till their company arrived.

"What in the world have you been about?" reiterated Mr. O'Donagough.

"Why, part of the time, my dear, we have been in the presence of Her Most Gracious Majesty, by whom we were received in the most flattering manner possible. I am sure I quite longed to stay and talk to her, she looked so very obliging. Well, and part of the time we were with all the rest of the fine folks, you know—seeing, and being seen, Donny, and I know one young lady by sight, at any rate, who was pretty tolerably admired, I can tell you. I never did see a girl stared at as Patty was—that's the fact. God knows I don't want to flatter her, and make her vain, for I hate it like poison. I never was vain myself, and I trust my daughter will follow in the same path. But truth is truth, and there was not a man could pass her without turning round, and having another look."

"I am not greatly surprised at that, my dear!" replied Mr. O'Donagough, looking very complacently at his glittering daughter. "Patty was a devilish fine girl when she was dressed with no finery at all, to speak of; and I can't say but what she looks all the better for what she has got on now. It would have been rather strange if the people had not looked at her, I think."

"Strange!" exclaimed Miss Matilda, "it would have been

downright unnatural! You do look beautiful to-day, Patty, and there's no good in denying it, even to your face. So don't be angry, my dear, for I can't help it."

"Well, then, if the truth *is* to be told," said Miss Louisa, "I won't be afraid to give my opinion, even before it is asked, and I must say that never in my life did I ever see Mrs. O'Donagough look so beautifully well as she does to-day. My goodness! how those feathers do become her, to be sure!"

After a few more delightful moments such as these, Patty and Matilda ran up stairs, leaving Mrs. O'Donagough to explain at length the jocose manœuvre of her noble friend, which had occasioned her late return.

"Well, Patty! tell me all. Did you enjoy it?" was the opening of the *tête-à-tête* in the fair *debutante's* bed-room.

"Enjoy it? I am sure I can hardly tell whether I did or not. It was all done in such a flurry. Of course I liked to see the people looking at me, and for once in her life mamma told the truth, for upon my honour and life, Matilda, I don't think that there was one man passed, unless perhaps it was some very old ones indeed, who did not turn his head round to look at me. And they were all, I suppose, dukes and lords, or else baronets, at the very least. And that is not like being stared at in a common way, you know."

"I think not, indeed," replied her friend, with great energy. "There's many a girl may get a good stare from people at the playhouse, you know, or anything of that sort, who would never get a single look from a lord. But I should think, Patty, that you were exactly the sort of girl to produce a great effect at court. Because you know that when there is such a quantity of rank and fashion, as the papers say, all brought together in a crowd, nobody that was not something particularly striking could hope to be looked at at all. I always have said there was something uncommonly striking in you. But you have not told me half yet. Did you see many people that you knew?"

"Yes! we saw the Stephensons and the Huberts—and there was another that I saw, too, that I plagued well, I'll be hanged if I didn't—nasty, false-hearted villain as he is!"

"You don't mean Sir Jack, do you?"

"Yes, but I do, though; and I would plague and torment him into his grave if I did but know the way, and dance over it, with you know who, Matilda, when I had got him there. You'll stare, perhaps, when I tell you that I got hold of his sir-ship's arm, and made my beau of him for an hour and a half by any watch in Christendom. And didn't I hold him tight? I do believe, at the very bottom of my heart, that he would have had me in the middle of the Red Sea, if he could."

"Nonsense, Patty! why should he have given you his arm, if he wanted so bad to get rid of you?"

"Why?—ask mamma that, Matilda. She *did* manage it capital, to be sure! But she didn't know one half-quarter the delight I took in it for all that. She don't see so far into a millstone as I do, and though I don't much think she herself believes all the lies she is so fond of telling about his being still my lover, I am quite sure that she has got no notion of what else he's after. But I have, Matilda. He is in love now, or pretending to be in love (which is much the same thing to him, good-for-nothing villain), with my whey-faced cousin Elizabeth. And I'll just ask you to guess how well pleased he was at being made, absolutely made, Matilda, to let go both Miss and Madam Hubert, in order to take mamma and me in tow, instead of them. Oh! it was capital fun, I promise you, and I'll have some more of it to-night, or I'll know the reason why. But I won't talk any more about it now, Matilda, for I am as hungry as a hound, and I won't be plagued all through dinner time with fearing to spoil my lovely pink satin. A spot of grease, you know, would just be murder. I know how I eat when I'm hungry. I'm not one of your mincing misses that's afraid to enjoy their food, for fear of spoiling either their gown, or their complexion, or their gentility. But I'll just make free with my finery, and cover it all up upon the bed till it's time to put it on again for the ball. You must help me to take it off, Matilda, for our lady's maid is over head and ears in business about the supper. 'Twill be such a glorious supper, Matilda! won't we enjoy it after the waltzing?"

Everything being of course out of joint throughout the mansion on this important day, Mr. O'Donagough and the four ladies sat down to dinner in the library at five o'clock, and from that hour till eight enjoyed themselves in all the luxury of the most unceremonious deshabille, eating, drinking, and planning improvements for all the great and little glories of the coming night.

But when the clock struck eight Patty started up, exclaiming, "Now, then, Matilda, let us be off. There are four of us to dress, and only one maid to do it all. Just let's have a look at the ball-room as we go by. As to the supper, there's no getting a peep at that, without having mamma too, for the door has been locked up ever since nine o'clock this morning; but I got in once, though, before they could turn the key, and saw sights, I can tell you. Such a trifle, Matilda! and no less than four tipsy cakes!"

While taking their look at the ball-room, and admiring all the arrangements for lighting and decoration, which, like everything else performed by Mr. O'Donagough at this period of his existence, was done upon a scale of great expense, Patty seized her friend Matilda by the waist, and began dragging her round the room in a waltz.

"Don't you long for it to begin?" said she, stopping at length to recover breath.

"Yes, I should, Patty," replied Matilda, in a plaintive voice; "notwithstanding all I have suffered, I really do think I should enjoy it, if——"

"If what?" demanded Patty, whirling herself round and round before a glass.

"Why—if I was as sure of having partners as you are. Girls at home are always sure to get the pick of the market!"

"As *I* am," replied Patty, with an expressive wink. "I can't say anything about that, my dear; I rather think I *am* tolerably sure of a partner to waltz with to-night. However, I'll promise one thing, and that is, that you shall be served with second best."

"Darling girl!" exclaimed Miss Matilda, with sudden animation. "Anybody that suffered themselves to be out of spirits and unhappy with you would never deserve to have a friend. I don't believe that there ever was such a dear, kind creature as you are! You may depend upon one thing, Patty, that I will stand by you through thick and thin, let what will come. You haven't said a word yet, have you?"

"No, not I—the best time of course must be when they have hundreds of eyes upon them, for they can't fly out, then, you know, let them wish it ever so much. Trust me, Matilda, I'm the girl for a plot, and you see if I don't carry it through. But not a word; up stairs for your life—come along! it's full time to begin beautifying."

Interesting as were the scenes which followed, and amusingly diversified as they were by the runnings in and runnings out of those engaged in them, from Mrs. O'Donagough's room to Patty's, and from Patty's room to Mrs. O'Donagough's, they must not be narrated at length. The two Miss Perkinses were in greater raptures than ever at the uncommon becomingness of everything Mrs. O'Donagough and Patty put on, and were rewarded for their good taste by having the loan of sundry ornamental baubles bestowed upon them. Everything is comparative; and the magnificent Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter, in all their courtly trappings, scarcely entered the ball-room more completely satisfied with their own appearance, than did Miss Louisa in a yellow silk dress, set off by a prodigiously massive set of garnets belonging to Mrs. O'Donagough, while her head was admirably arranged with a few flowers, a few curls, and one little red plume, all from the stores of the same liberal lady. The gentle and now revived Matilda wore her white dress, adorned at every possible corner with blue bows and white beads, which had once decorated the charms of her generous Patty.

At length they were all complete! Each passed in review before each, and each declared that each was perfect.

"Now, then, let us all go down stairs!" said Mrs. O'Donagough. The ball-room was by this time lighted up, and blazed away in all the mingled glory of lamps and wax-lights.

"Well, then, I never *did* see anything so beautiful!" exclaimed the two Miss Perkinses at once.

They found Mr. O'Donagough and his friend Foxcroft employed in giving with their own hands the last finish to the attractions of the third drawing-room, which though last and least of the suite of rooms, was by no means either as to their importance in the consideration of their present owner.

Some people may suppose that such social meetings as the present between Mr. Foxcroft and Miss Matilda Perkins must have been awkward, and that even the tranquil-minded Miss Louisa might have felt in some degree embarrassed by his presence. But such persons know not Mr. Foxcroft. There was a quiet, hard, dry audacity about him, which served his purpose as well as the purest self-approving innocence; and so admirably did he sustain the demeanour of a slight, but very respectful acquaintance to both the ladies, that for very shame they could not testify emotion before the eyes of one so incapable of sharing it. There was, therefore, no drawback whatever to the exhilarating brightness of the scene, nor to the throb of satisfaction with which the first thundering knock at the door was welcomed by all. Another followed, and another, and another, so closely that even the practised looker-on, Louisa, could hardly have ventured to specify which of the many guests came first.

It was not long before the business of the third drawing-room commenced; not, indeed, that most important part of it for the bringing on of which the whole costly entertainment was arranged, but such little skirmishing affairs as sometimes mark the coming on of a battle on which hangs much.

The plan of Mr. O'Donagough, boldly conceived, and carried into execution with as strict adherence to his Parisian model as the manners of the country would permit, had answered perfectly. The name of Stephenson had certainly helped him in some quarters, and that of Hubert in others; but it is probable that he would have done all he wanted without either. A few tolerable good dinners, with tolerably good wine *à discrétion*, and the power of playing high, playing low, or not playing at all, which followed them, had made it easier than some genuine gentlefolks may deem probable for Mr. Allen O'Donagough to make up both his dinner table, and his card table, very greatly to his satisfaction. But such a mode of life as he was now pursuing was not entered into upon any idle speculation of enjoying a gay existence while it lasted, and just winning enough to keep himself clear of ruin when it should be over. From the first hour of its conception, up to the very important epoch at which he had now arrived, one object had been ever steadily before him, namely, the making prey of some rich, unwary novice, whose ruin should establish him in idleness and luxury for ever. On first becoming acquainted with Sir Henry Seymour in his real character, he for a short time really believed

Patty's positive assurances that the young gentleman was her lover, and intended to be her husband; which violent improbability could only have been received as truth by such a man as O'Donagough, from his overweening admiration of his daughter's beauty. But the being present at a very few interviews between them sufficed to open his eyes to the real state of the case, and he quickly atoned to himself for the gross and stupid blunder of which he had been guilty, by dooming the young whist-loving baronet to the expiation of all his falsehood in love, by the surrender of all his fortune at play. Mr. O'Donagough, however, had yet another blunder to acknowledge in his estimate of Sir Henry Seymour's character. His losing an occasional rubber at whist, when playing at five guinea points, was no surer proof of his being a probable victim to the maddening orgies of the gaming table, than his having kissed Miss Patty was of his intention to convert her into Lady Seymour. And this blunder, too, Mr. O'Donagough found out, without any very long delay; but he found out two other things also; first, that the highly-connected young baronet made an excellent decoy duck to his evening parties, it being quite enough to mention, *ça et là*, that he was one of the whist party, to guarantee the perfect respectability of the *rather* high play sometimes found there. The other discovery taught him, that whatever advantages the company of Sir Henry Seymour brought were, and ever would be, at his command, so long as the ill-advised young man continued to tremble at the idea of Sir Edward Stephenson's becoming acquainted with the fact of his mad-cap voyage to Sydney.

With this he had manœuvred very skilfully—never pushing his troublesome friendship so far as to make the young man desperate; in which state he might have been tempted to do the wisest thing possible, and have opened the whole of his hot-headed, but essentially harmless proceeding to Sir Edward. But to this he had never yet been driven; and having been made perfectly aware by the admirable tactics of Mr. O'Donagough, that he was *not* expected to be in love with Patty, he scrupled not to remain on very civil visiting terms with the whole family, which, with its chief, assumed something like a tone of intimacy from the secret which existed between them.

But, though foiled in his hopes of becoming master of the broad lands of Sir Henry Seymour, Mr. O'Donagough had not stood the heavy charges of two London seasons in vain. He had made money, a great deal of money, considerably more than he had expended, and that, too, quietly and snugly, without any *eclat* or disagreeable gossip whatever. But the time for which he had all along quietly waited was now come; and the night of the day on which his wife and daughter had been presented at court, the night on which his house was to be sanctified by the presence of many persons, not only of high condition, but of

high character, was chosen by him as that on which his great *tour de force* was to be made.

Among many young men with whom he had made acquaintance at the various clubs to which he had contrived to get admitted, was one on whose fair low forehead nature had written *gullible* in characters not to be mistaken. No sooner did Mr. O'Donagough look in the face of this personage than he sought and obtained an introduction to him. His next care was to ascertain who and what he was; and having learnt upon satisfactory authority that the youth had just thrown off the odious control of a brace of guardians, and that he was in undisputed and uncontrolled possession of a fine estate, than he cultivated his acquaintance with an assiduity that left the young gentleman very little chance of escaping his friendship.

This doomed person, whose name was Ronaldson, no longer a canny Scotsman, however, whatever his forefathers might have been, was one of those unfortunate, but often amiable, individuals, who are born without the capability of uttering the monosyllable No. He was not very wise, certainly, but there are hundreds of weaker intellect than Mr. Ronaldson, who go through life without making any very remarkable blunder, merely because they have the power of pronouncing it, and are capable upon occasion of exclaiming, Such "a word in due season, how good is it!"

But poor Robert Ronaldson had no such power, and when he was asked to dinner, he dined; and when he was asked to play cards, he did play cards; and when he was asked to bet, he did bet,—high bets, low bets, or middling bets, precisely according to the invitation given, and regulated by no other law whatever.

The three or four thousand pounds which Mr. O'Donagough had already won from this unfortunate young man, had but whetted his appetite; and there was such an ungrumbling *sans-souciance* in the manner in which he drew his cheques, that the operation of ruining him completely, seemed peculiarly fitted for, and suitable to, such a remarkably good-natured man as Mr. O'Donagough was generally declared to be; so that, in a word, the complete fleecing of Mr. Robert Ronaldson was decided upon between Mr. O'Donagough, and his chief clerk of the works, Mr. Foxcroft; and the evening of Mrs. O'Donagough's grand ball, fixed on as the time for performing it.

Mr. Ronaldson was not quite the first, but very far from being the last, of the invited guests who arrived. Dancing, though it had not yet reached the height of waltzing, was begun, and a somewhat stiff and sober quadrille was being walked through, by way of prologue to the evening's amusement.

O'Donagough had not yet played himself, though for nearly an hour past a steady party had been at work in the third room, of whom Foxcroft was one. When Mr. Ronaldson arrived, therefore, he found the master of the mansion lounging about

and criticising the ladies with an air of the most perfect *nonchalance* and *bon ton*.

"Ah! Ronaldson! how are you? are you a dancer?" adding, however, before the young man had time to answer, "not you, I'll answer for it. You understand life better than that, Ronaldson; nothing but the Johnny Raws are seduced into so very laborious a process for the mere gratification of looking at pretty faces, and pretty feet."

"Why, to say the truth, I do not very often dance. It is not half so amusing as a game at cards"

"I don't think it is," replied O'Donagough, in a tone of great indifference; "however, I can't let you play cards now, because there really is a monstrous number of fine girls here, and we must give them a look. Come with me to that corner, Ronaldson, we shall find it a very snug look-out."

The facile young man followed him to the place he indicated, and began looking at the ladies as he was told to do. Having got him there, however, Mr. O'Donagough made no great exertions to amuse him, merely saying from time to time, "Mercy on me! what a crowd we shall have! It will be perfectly stifling," which words, accompanied by many expressive yawns, and a frequent shifting of the weight from one leg to the other, speedily produced the intended effect on his companion, who began to yawn likewise, and to declare in a tone not the least in the world expressive of pleasure, that there was a very great crowd indeed.

"And not a chair to be hoped for!" exclaimed O'Donagough. "For mercy's sake, my dear fellow, don't let us stay here, stuck up for show, like deals in a timber-yard. Upon my soul I cannot stand it—nor *stand* any longer. Let us see if we cannot do better in one of the other rooms."

To the second drawing-room they repaired accordingly, and a very narrow cane bench being fortunately disengaged, they seated themselves upon it, having before them a pleasant peep now and then across the crowd, of the snug comforts of the card-room, where the chairs and sofas were of the most luxurious form possible.

"Is there any reason why we should not go into the card-room now, O'Donagough?" demanded Mr. Ronaldson, after having enjoyed the luxury of the cane bench for about ten minutes.

"Not if you wish it, certainly. Heaven knows I should prefer it myself, for it is the only place that looks comfortable; but as this is the first dance you have ever been at here, I thought I must do the honours. But you are something like me, I believe, and have no great taste for such Tomfooleries." And so saying, his attentive host now led the way to the soft sofas, easy chairs, and quiet rubber of the third room.

Ronaldson threw himself into a delightful *bergère* at the corner of the whist-table, and for some time seemed to amuse himself exceedingly well by watching the progress of the game, but

at length he was again seen to yawn, upon which Mr. O'Donagough, who had been in the room a little, and out of the room a little, and in short, doing everything that looked the least like being anxious to play, said as he again drew near to him, "Don't you think, Ronaldson, we might contrive to make up another table? As you don't dance, you will find it monstrous stupid if you don't play."

"I should like it of all things," replied Ronaldson, "if you think you can be spared from the ball-room."

"Oh, faith! I've done my duty there. But I don't see a soul likely to play a real good rubber, such as you and I enjoy. Let us have a game at piquet, Ronaldson?"

"I shall like that better than whist," replied the young man, "for I am a better match for you there."

"You have found that out, have you?" said O'Donagough, laughing. "You are quite right, certainly, but never mind. If I lose at piquet with you, I'll win at whist with somebody else. It all comes wonderfully even at the end of the year."

Within five minutes after he had pronounced these words, Mr. Allen O'Donagough found himself placed at the very identical little table, in the precise chair, in the precise corner of the room, with exactly the degree of light, and no more, and exactly the same companion, and no other, that he had planned and predetermined, at least three months before.

The progress of the game varied but little from what pretty generally happens upon such occasions. From the time they began playing, till the majority of the company began moving down stairs to supper, Mr. Ronaldson won every game, with the exception of two, which he was permitted to lose, that the stimulant of variety might not be altogether wanting. When the word *supper*, however, caught the ears of the young man, who, notwithstanding his exhilarating good fortune, was by that time very seriously hungry, he hinted a wish to follow in the train that was still pouring through the doors; but Mr. O'Donagough, who seemed vexed and irritated by his continued losses, said, "No! upon my soul, Ronaldson! That is not fair, you have won pretty well every game, and now you are for carrying off the spoil without giving me even a chance of revenge."

This accusation startled, and somewhat nettled the young man, who, with all his defects, was not in the least degree disposed to take an unfair advantage of any one.

"Upon my honour, O'Donagough, I had no such idea," he replied, very gravely. "I will play after supper as long as you like, and for what you like, but in simple truth, I am very hungry."

"Foxcroft! your table is up, is it not?" cried O'Donagough, to his faithful and observant friend.

"Yes! they are all off to the supper table," replied the accomplished minister.

"Then do you be off to the supper-table too, my good fellow,

and see that Richardson brings us up a tray worth having, with a flask or two of champagne; it's your deal, Ronaldson. There is nothing I abominate like standing about in a supper-room, pushed right and left by a hundred hungry and thirsty women, who never dream that any one can want anything but themselves. You will do fifty times better here, Ronaldson, you may depend on it."

"Likely enough," replied his easy companion. "Give me half a chicken, and a glass of champagne, and I'll play all night if you like it."

Meanwhile, the more ostensible business of the meeting was going on in an equally satisfactory manner in the ball-room. The party, which was really large and brilliant, assembled with fewer exceptions from disappointments and excuses than might have been expected, and the whirling waltz went on greatly to the satisfaction of Patty; and now and then, of Matilda too, for about one set in four she was blessed with a partner by a sudden fit of recollection in her devoted friend. At a little after midnight, Mrs. Hubert and her daughter, together with the whole party who had dined with them, entered the rooms. General Hubert was prevented from accompanying them by a gentleman, who, having called upon him very late in the evening upon business of importance, still remained with him in his library, when the rest of the party set off for Mrs. O'Donagough's; but he sent down a slip of paper to his wife, on which was written in pencil, "I shall come to Curzon-street the moment I am at liberty—send back the carriage for me."

Mrs. Hubert and the party which entered with her, could not have made their appearance in any *salon* in Europe without producing *a sensation*, and it may easily be imagined that Mrs. O'Donagough was not sparing in her efforts to circulate the fact of their very near relationship to herself. Of all her glorious day, this was decidedly the most glorious moment, and perhaps in her own heart she might have felt a sort of undefined consciousness that she had reached her culminating point, for as she looked round upon the grand display of lights, and flowery decorations—as she listened to the gay strains of Strauss—as she marked the grand display of dancing elegance that floated round her—and finally, as she gazed upon the graceful array of distinguished relatives as they walked up the room, she heaved a deep-drawn sigh as if overpowered by the fulness of her contentment.

Sir Henry Seymour had been for some time in the room, and joined Lady Stephenson, Mrs. Hubert, and their train, the moment they appeared. But of all that fair host, there was but one who met him kindly, nay, even that one felt in her heart of hearts that he was unworthy, and though, when she remarked that all looked upon him coldly, a sort of relenting softness led her still to greet him as a friend, she would have

better liked that the state of things should have been reversed, and that, as heretofore, he should have been welcomed by the smiles of all, so that she might have been released from the sort of pitying necessity of being civil. But this state of things endured but a short time; he immediately asked her to dance, and though she agreed to do so, merely because she knew not how to avoid it, her judgment of him was completely changed before the measure ended.

Little as Sir Henry Seymour had hitherto given his friends reason to admire his deliberative wisdom, he had been for some time past giving proofs of it, though they knew it not, which might well entitle him to respect. He had loved Elizabeth, young as she was, almost from the first moment he had renewed acquaintance with her after his return from Australia. This, however, was not till they met in Paris, about a year after the departure of the Hubert family from Brighton. But the feeling she inspired was not, at that period, at least, such as altogether to cast out fear. He remembered that the guardian he had so grievously offended was by marriage her uncle, and though the reconciliation between them was perfect, he dreaded lest the harem-scarem reputation of his boyhood might become an impediment to the dearest hope of his life. For this reason he very wisely determined to look and love for a while longer, and though in spite of all his resolutions he certainly had betrayed, both to Elizabeth and Elizabeth's watchful friends, the secret of his heart, he had never, till this eventful evening, breathed a word which could be fairly construed into a confession of love.

But now, though the time of his self-imposed probation was not yet over, he could no longer restrain the impulse which urged him at once to avow his wishes, and receive his doom. More circumstances than one led him to this. The evident sensation produced among the critical crowd at St. James's that morning by the appearance of Elizabeth, had sent a qualm of terror to his heart, from the idea that she must inevitably be asked in marriage by half the peerage. In addition to this misery, came the outrage to his feelings produced by Mrs. O'Donagough's public seizure of him, and his consequent enforced desertion of all he most loved, for all he most disliked; and, to crown all, he was by no means slow to perceive in the altered eyes of his friends, when he presented himself to them in Mrs. O'Donagough's drawing-room, that he had offended them, as he could not doubt, by his involuntary share in the adventures of the morning.

The resolution upon which he had been pondering from the moment he had bowed himself away from the carriage-door of Mrs. O'Donagough, became at that moment fixed and unchangeable. He had endured to linger with very tolerable philosophy on the threshold of happiness, but to see himself thrust from it in consequence of his presumed attachment to the O'Donagough race, was beyond his strength. He determined not to leave the

room till he had asked Elizabeth Hubert to be his wife—and he determined, too, that should her answer be favourable, he would not live twenty-four hours longer without exonerating himself from the intolerable thraldom of feeling at the mercy of Mr. O'Donagough, by confessing both to Sir Edward and the general the whole history of his foolish masquerading expedition to Australia.

In both these resolutions he was quite right; and for all the wisdom of the first of them he was speedily rewarded by the beautiful simplicity with which Elizabeth permitted him to read her innocent young heart. How far the closing of that day was unlike its opening, to both of them, may be very safely left to conjecture; while the narrative turns to scenes of rather a different character, which were going on at no great distance from them.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

THERE was, besides Elizabeth, one other person of Mrs. Hubert's party who entered the rooms with a spirit preoccupied, and nevertheless awake in no common degree to a feeling of deep interest, concerning all that might chance to pass there. This person was Mrs. Stephenson. From the time she had met Mrs. O'Donagough at the house of her father, this lively lady had been labouring without intermission to obtain intelligence respecting the source of her newly-acquired wealth, together with every particular possible to be got at, respecting the position and manner of life of Mr. O'Donagough. Having an extremely clever lady's maid, and a saucy French page, who could have worked his way through a deal board as readily as a gimlet, had he expected to find either mischief or profit behind it,—having two such functionaries, both very devotedly attached to her, and bound in all ways to do her bidding, it is not, perhaps, very extraordinary that she contrived to obtain a few hints which confirmed her in the belief that good Mr. Willoughby's suggestion of a large fortune having fallen into the possession of Mr. O'Donagough was less probable than desirable. In short, she came to the house fully aware that high play was carried on there, and was much inclined to suspect that Sir Henry Seymour's intimacy in the family was owing to this. With a great deal of warm-hearted good feeling, Nora had also a little of that species of animated interest in the affairs of those she loved, which sometimes leads to interference more active than judicious. Most women loving and trusting a husband, as completely as she loved and trusted hers, would have confided all their suspicions to him, and trusted to his management the delicate task of discovering whether the man she had wished to see the husband of her niece was undeserving this happiness, either from his being a gambler, or an inconstant. But no, Mrs. Stephenson very greatly preferred managing the whole mat-

ter herself, and, excepting her maid and her page, no living being had the slightest suspicion of what she had got in her head.

For a short time after Seymour and Elizabeth had stood up side by side for the purpose of walking about a little, and talking a good deal to the various airs of a quadrille, Mrs. Stephenson took the trouble of moving from one side of the room to the other, and back again, and then a little on one side, and then a little on the other, in order to ascertain whether they appeared to be on the same sort of terms together which she had formerly remarked with so much satisfaction. It was not very long before she became perfectly satisfied on this point, and then she determined to take advantage of having completely separated herself from her party in order to penetrate to the card-room, and make her own observations upon what she might find there, without being interrupted by anybody.

The crowd that filled the rooms, and which at that time was at its height, prevented this manœuvre from being remarked by any individual of her own party. Frederic was not there: for Mr. O'Donagough, having long ago ascertained that he was not a playing man, had gradually, as his connection increased with those who were, made himself less agreeable, and less observant, so that the acquaintance begun at Brighton would have been a decided bore in London, had it not tacitly died away by mutual concert. Without any interruption whatever, therefore, the enterprising Nora made her way across the first room, through the second, and into the third, till she found herself within a few feet of Mr. O'Donagough, Mr. Ronaldson, their snug little table, and their very quiet game of piquet. She perceived a considerable quantity of gold upon the table, which surprised her not, but it did surprise her to observe that it was the simple-looking young man who constantly won every game, while her strongly suspected acquaintance, Mr. O'Donagough as constantly lost without manifesting any symptom of vexation, or indeed of emotion of any kind. Beside Mr. Ronaldson, and immediately opposite O'Donagough stood Mr. Foxcroft. To Mrs. Stephenson this gentleman was totally a stranger, nor would his appearance in any way have attracted her attention, had she not observed that a slight smile, which he sought to conceal by passing his hand across his mouth, was perceptible each time that the elder gentleman counted over a handful of sovereigns to the younger one. She was quite sure, too, by the direction of the eyes of both, that whatever thoughts produced this smile were in common between Mr. O'Donagough and the gaunt figure from whom it proceeded, though nothing in the slightest degree approaching to an answering smile could be perceived on the well-regulated features of the former.

It was just as she had observed this for the third time, and that some vague notion not altogether unlike the truth was growing into very shrewd suspicion in the mind of Mrs. Stephenson, that

she felt her arm touched by some one beside her, and looking round, perceived Elizabeth Peters staring at Mr. O'Donagough very earnestly, while at the same time she was calling her attention with more familiarity than their acquaintance warranted.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Stephenson," she said, "but will you be so kind as to tell me the name of that gentleman opposite?"

"It is the master of the house—Mr. O'Donagough."

"O'Donagough?" repeated Miss Peters in a cautious whisper. "Indeed, Mrs. Stephenson, that is not his real name."

At any other time it is possible that this abrupt contradiction from a person very nearly a stranger to her might have obtained from Mrs. Stephenson a look of offended surprise and nothing more; but in the present state of her mind, nothing could be more certain of commanding her attention than such a communication as this. She immediately passed her arm under that of Miss Peters, and silently drew her through the crowd till they reached the landing-place on the top of the stairs; there, comparatively speaking, they were alone, and Mrs. Stephenson after mounting a step or two of the ascending flight for greater security, turned to her surprised companion, and said in a tone of the deepest interest, "Tell me, Miss Peters, for mercy's sake, tell me instantly, what it is you mean by the words you just now spoke to me."

"I mean, Mrs. Stephenson, that unless I am a great deal more mistaken than ever I was in my whole life before, that person who you say is the master of the house is Major Allen, a man that I knew very well at Clifton very nearly twenty years ago."

Never certainly did any lady in the act of weaving a romance and elucidating a mystery, receive a piece of intelligence more well-timed, or more completely german to the subject of her thoughts.

"My dear Miss Peters!" she exclaimed, catching the hand of her companion, and fervently clasping it, "are you indeed convinced, fully convinced, of the truth of what you now assert? It is no idle curiosity which makes me ask you this; your answer is of real importance."

"Indeed Mrs. Stephenson, I am; and I would not say it, unless I was quite sure."

"But how can we account for no other persons having recognised him? Did not Agnes know that Major Allen? and I well remember hearing Mr. Stephenson, and the general also, talk over that same season at Clifton of which you must now be speaking, and naming him in a manner that proved they must have known him personally. I think, Miss Peters, that it is impossible."

"It is not impossible at all, Mrs. Stephenson," replied Elizabeth Peters. "I well remember that neither Agnes nor either of the gentlemen you name, ever spoke to him at all; whereas I was the person to whom he always addressed himself.

I was very young then, and did not find out till afterwards that he was not so gentlemanlike a person as he pretended to be. But I was more with my aunt Barnaby than any of them, and this man was certainly making love to her, though it did not come to anything *then*. You may depend upon it that what I say is true—I remember every feature in his face, but most particularly I remember a wart that he has on the left temple, which the wig that he wears now is intended, I suppose, to cover; but while I stood looking at him he wiped his forehead with his pocket handkerchief, and just pushed back the hair, so that I saw it perfectly. I was very sure it was Major Allen before that, but I could not have any doubt afterwards."

"And he calls himself Allen O'Donagough!" exclaimed Mrs. Stephenson in the softest of whispers, and suddenly feeling perfectly convinced of the fact. "Nothing was ever so fortunate as my meeting you here, my dear Miss Peters. You will not, I am sure, refuse to assist me in the project I am bent upon, of completely unmasking this detestable man. It would be a very righteous thing to do it, even without any personal motive—but I have many. Will you then return with me to the card room—remain close to me—and without attracting attention, even by a whisper, let us both carefully watch what is going on? You have already proved that you have a keen eye—I am not *quite* blind myself; and with your help, and that of my eye-glass, I fully expect to see something worth noting."

Exceedingly well pleased to find herself of more consequence than usual, Elizabeth Peters expressed her readiness to do anything that Mrs. Stephenson wished; and once more linked arm-in-arm, they re-entered the card room together. By the time they recovered their position near the little piquet table, a murmur about "going down to supper" began to make itself heard, and a movement was already perceptible among the crowd. Silently pressing the arm of her companion, Mrs. Stephenson very skilfully fell back, as if pressed upon by the passing throng, and ensconced herself and Miss Peters in a draperied recess, which contained a sofa, and which might, by letting the curtains drop, be made exactly to correspond in appearance with the one window of the apartment, giving to the irregular room the advantageous effect of two windows instead of one, and a niche. During the long consultations which had been held between Mrs. O'Donagough and her friend Louisa, concerning the most advantageous manner of setting off her "beautiful rooms" for this great occasion, nothing had detained them so long as this puzzling recess. Miss Louisa was very strongly of opinion that the general effect of the three rooms altogether would be a great deal indeed more grand by making it appear that there were two regular handsome windows in the card room. Whereas Mrs. O'Donagough herself, remembering, perhaps, the days of Silverton and Captain Tate, declared that

nothing could look so inviting as that pretty sofa with the draperies festooned before it. At length the amiable wife exclaimed, "We will ask Donny about it." And Miss Louisa was accordingly despatched to the study to invite the master of the house to the consultation.

"Well, Mr. O'D., what do you say to it?" demanded his wife, after fairly stating the *pros* and *cons*.

"It had much better look like a window at once, my dear," he replied. "I don't want people to be *tempted*, as you call it, into sitting in this room at all. Nobody can enjoy a game at cards unless the room is quiet; and though I know just at first that the people will be pushing in and out, I am determined to have a quiet hour or two after supper, and I shall just lock the door, you may depend upon it."

"That is just as you please, my dear," answered his wife, gaily. "By that time, all the people will have seen that we have *got* three rooms; and, of course, that's all I care about it."

"Very well, then, that's all right; but I'd rather you would make the recess look merely like a window if you can." And so the discussion ended, Mrs. O'Donagough very obediently arranging the curtains of the window and the recess exactly alike. But about half an hour before the company began to arrive—while Mr. O'Donagough was giving some last instructions to Foxcroft in the library, and while the two Miss Perkinses and Patty were still indulging in some last looks, last pins, and last pinches before their looking-glasses above—the highly-delighted mistress of the fête beguiled those moments of expectation by walking backwards and forwards through what she loved to call her suite of rooms, and pushing a bench an inch one way, and pulling a chair an inch that, in the idle attempt to improve what her heart told her was already perfect. In the course of these repeated promenades, it occurred to her that the appearance both of the real window and the fictitious one would be greatly more elegant were their draperies partially drawn up, disclosing in the one case a small portion of a coloured blind, which she greatly admired, and in the other a *very* slight peep into her beloved recess, which, though not sufficient to induce anybody to penetrate its darkness, nevertheless might give the idea of some addition to the extent, of which she was so particularly proud. This last improvement completed her labours of preparation, for the three ladies from above entered the room immediately after; and their admiration of her and her rooms, and her admiration of them and their dresses, left no time for any more finishing touches, before the company began to arrive.

It was, then, into this dark recess that Mrs. Stephenson and her assistant conspirator slid, unobserved of any, during the interesting moment when all but the piquet-players were pressing forward to supper. A slight touch of the finger caused one of the curtains to drop entirely, and behind this shelter they

seated themselves, having, by the partial elevation of the other, a perfect view of the persons whose proceedings they were about to watch.

They heard Mr. Ronaldson's petition for supper, and Mr. O'Donagough's answer to it. They saw the "tray worth having" brought in by the intelligent-looking Richardson. They saw Mr. Foxcroft, the only individual left in the room besides themselves and the players, quietly lock both the doors, and then assume to himself the office of butler, which he performed with so much zealous gaiety, that one flask of champagne was finished and another begun before he attempted to eat or drink anything himself. Neither did Mr. O'Donagough share largely in the conviviality of the moment, He professed himself to be quite out of heart from his infernal beating—swore that he had never met with any one so completely his master before, but declared that if he sat up all night and lost his last shilling he would not give in.

Mr. Ronaldson, whose head was not very capable of bearing steadily either his good fortune or the good wine, was beginning to grow loquacious, when O'Donagough, perceiving that the champagne had done all the work he wanted from it, at least for the present, brought back the attention of the young man to the business part of the entertainment, by saying—

"Now, Ronaldson! have at you again—double or quits—double the whole of my confounded losses, or quits. Do you agree?"

"To be sure I do," replied the young man, with a jovial laugh. "What do you take me for?"

"For a very honest fellow, Ronaldson, who, knowing he has got the advantage in play, is willing to let his adversary take a chance from luck! Just put that tray back upon the other table, Foxcroft—we shall have no more whist to-night, I dare say."

Foxcroft obeyed, and then placed himself, as before, behind Ronaldson, and precisely opposite to O'Donagough. It was then that Mrs. Stephenson, whose interest in the scene passing before her was now worked up to a point that made her utterly forgetful of the awkwardness of her own situation—it was now for the first time that she began to comprehend fully the value, if not exactly the nature, of the telegraphic signs made by Mr. Foxcroft for the benefit of Mr. O'Donagough. It was quite impossible, unless he had turned himself completely round, that Ronaldson could even be conscious of Mr. Foxcroft being near him; while on the other hand, not a glance of the eye, or a motion of the finger, could escape being seen by O'Donagough, and that so distinctly, that the mere act of raising his eyes for an instant was all that was required to obtain all the information which it was the purpose of Mr. Foxcroft to convey.

Mrs. Stephenson felt, as she said afterwards, that she would willingly have staked her own life, and almost that of one of her

children, upon the issue of that game. Nor would there in truth have been any great risk in doing so. The event, as all must anticipate, was in favour of Mr. O'Donagough, who, as soon as it was ended, said, very composedly—

"Well, then, Ronaldson, now we start fair again. I have had a tremendous beating, nevertheless—nine games to three. However, I scorn to show a white feather! If I lose, my Devonshire estates must pay for it. If you will, I am ready to play you again for the same amount as I have now won, and I will tell you what I will do besides—for I can't endure the idea of turning craven, merely because I have met with a better player than myself—I will go on with you for six games—just write it down, Foxcroft—I will go on with you for six games, double or quits every time—and rather than let you count me a craven, I would go on for a dozen so, only I think we shall have had enough of it by that time, and the party will be broke up, and we shall all be ready to go to bed. Do you agree to it?"

Poor Ronaldson, who at the freshest hour of the morning would hardly have been capable of judging accurately of the nature and extent of the proposition now offered to him, was at this moment as utterly incapable of doing so as if his age had amounted to one lustre only, instead of five. With a laugh that was very nearly that of imbecility, he rubbed his hands, and repeated again and again, "Done, done, done."

Another, and another game was then played, of course with the same result as the last. The young man's purse and well-stored pocket-book were by that time exhausted, upon which Foxcroft brought forth writing materials, and the half-sobered, half-stultified Ronaldson set his hand at the termination of the next game to the acknowledgment of an enormous debt.

Mrs. Stephenson's position now became extremely painful. Though perfectly certain of the nefarious nature of the transaction that was going on before her eyes, she began, as her embarrassment increased, and her spirits sank, to doubt whether she would be able to prove it to others in such a manner as to exonerate the unfortunate young man from the effects of his folly. If not, she was conscious that in thus quietly looking on, and suffering their play to proceed, she was making herself a party to the poor victim's ruin. A moment's calculation sufficed to show her that the stake, if again doubled at the monstrous amount to which it had reached, would of itself constitute a large fortune, and this again had to be doubled, and the amount doubled yet again, before the match which she had heard agreed for could be finished. As to any change of fortune in the event of the games being played, she felt perfectly assured it *could* not occur; and thus, if her fears as to the value of her own evidence were well grounded, she should be doomed, unless she summoned courage to interfere, to see a vast robbery committed, which it was most certainly, at the present moment, in her power to prevent.

So earnestly had her attention been fixed upon the events of the card table, from the time of her entering the recess, that she had paid no attention to the sounds proceeding from the ball-room; but she now, as the fourth game of the match was rapidly progressing to its conclusion, listened attentively, and became convinced that though the music had not ceased, the company were departing. She heard many names called upon the stairs, a door to which stood open in the middle room, and thus at intervals permitted the sounds to reach her, despite the closed doors of the card-room. The idea that she might, if she lingered longer, outstay her own party, and cause them thereby the most serious alarm, as well as place herself and Miss Peters in a situation the most painfully embarrassing, sufficed to screw her courage to the fitting point, and as Mr. Ronaldson at the end of a deal said, in a trembling voice—"I am forty-five to your ninety, O'Donagough, and the deal is yours,"—just as these boding words reached her ears, she started up, and, seizing her companion by the arm, drew her with her across the room, overturning two chairs in her progress, and on reaching the door, the key of which readily obeyed her hand, she turned, and said in a voice much more distinct than she herself hoped for—"Play no more, young man! We have watched the game, and know that you have been cheated. Throw down your cards and play no more. Your promissory note is not worth a farthing, for we can both witness to the manner in which it was won."

Mr. Ronaldson had sprung from his chair the moment the two ladies had become visible, and standing aside to let them pass, stared, much after the manner he might have done had he seen a spectre. Mr. Foxcroft, who knew neither of the ladies by sight, flew to the door with some vague hope of preventing their going out, and whether he thought they might be subsequently pushed up the chimney, or thrown out of the window, he probably did not know himself at the moment; but whatever his projects might have been, they were rendered abortive by the door having yielded to the hand of Mrs. Stephenson before he reached it.

Mr. O'Donagough himself sat immovable, nor would it have been easy to perceive from his countenance that anything very remarkable had happened. The triumph of perceptibly shaking his philosophy remained for his old acquaintance Elizabeth Peters, who, recovering her courage the moment she saw the light streaming in upon them from the now fast-thinning rooms, forcibly drew back Mrs. Stephenson a step or two, and while several passers-by entered from curiosity, pronounced very distinctly, as she fixed her eyes upon his face—

"I should like to know, sir, why it is that you go by a false name? Your name is Allen. At least, you were always called Major Allen at Clifton, and that you know, as well as I."

On hearing this, and on seeing the many eyes which were

by this time fixed upon him, the bold spirit of the unquhile O'Donagough, now again Major Allen, was so far moved that he rose from his chair, and taking advantage of his accurate local knowledge, left the room by a side door which led to a back staircase, and was no more heard of that night.

Even the short moment occupied by these startling words of Miss Peters, was sufficient for the drawing together so many of the remaining guests around the door of the card room, that something like a crowd appeared to surround it as the two ladies, still pale and strongly agitated, passed through it. Their only object was now to find some member of their own party who might assist their retreat from the scene in which they had played so strange a part; but her first glance at the rooms made Mrs. Stephenson exclaim—"They are gone! Gracious heaven! What terror must Frederic be enduring on reaching home and not finding me!"

Great, indeed, was her delight, when she perceived General Hubert approaching with hasty steps towards the spot where many voices were already discussing the adventure which nobody understood, but which everybody was endeavouring to explain.

"Thank heaven!" he exclaimed, eagerly receiving the hand which the trembling Nora held out to him. "What does all this mean? Where have you been hid? We have been looking for you in every direction for above an hour. Frederic is just gone, for the second time, to see if you have reached home!"

"I have guessed it all! But for mercy's sake ask no questions now," replied Mrs. Stephenson. "Take me away, dear general! Take us both away! we have both suffered together! We have been shut up looking on a horrid scene for hours. Yet now it is over, I am thankful that we had courage to act as we have done; but take us away, I implore you."

"If we go now, my dear Nora," replied the general, inexpressibly puzzled by her words, but convinced that it was no time to ask for explanation, "if we go now, Frederic will again miss you. Agnes is still in the other room—nothing could persuade her to leave the house till she was convinced that you were not in it. If you will sit down quietly with her a few minutes, Stephenson will return, and I am sure it will be better for you both. Miss Peters does not look so deadly pale as you do, but I feel her arm trembling like your own."

While this was said, the general supported the two ladies, whose steps very unaffectedly faltered, across the room which divided the card-room from the principal drawing-room; but on reaching the door of it, instead of finding the quiet he had offered them, they were met by a scene which rendered anything like tranquillity in the neighbourhood of it quite impossible. Standing in the middle of the room was Mrs. O'Donagough with hands clasped, head-dress dishevelled, and her breast heaving with convulsive sobs. Beside her stood Miss Louisa

Perkins, with a pocket-handkerchief at her eyes; while, with the exception of one silent group which occupied a sofa in a distant corner, every individual not making part of the crowd now in possession of the card-room, stood around her listening to her lamentations, and occasionally uttering a word or two of what seemed very unmeaning consolation.

"She is gone! She is eloped! Heaven only knows where, and for what! Where is her father? He has got his hands full, I dare say. But for mercy's sake let somebody go and bring Foxcroft to me—he shall go—— Oh! dear! Oh! dear! Where shall he go? Where shall I send him? I have no more idea than the child unborn! But I am sure and positive, as I stand here, that it is that horrid vile yellow man with the black whiskers that has taken her! Does nobody know such a person as Don Tornorino? or Tornapino? or some such name as that, wasn't it, Louisa? Dear, darling, good-for-nothing creature as she is! I saw her waltzing away like one possessed with him, and when I asked her how he came to be here—for goodness knows I never asked him—she answered, dear, wicked, clever creature, in her own droll way, 'Never you mind that, mamma! Here he is, and that's enough?' Oh dear! Oh dear! If he does not turn out to be a man of rank and fortune I shall die and break my heart—I know I shall!"

Such were the sounds that from the crested pride

of the unfortunate Mrs. O'Donagough poured forth amidst a torrent of tears, and a whirlwind of sighs, interrupted at intervals, but not checked, by the interjections of her hearers.

"How very distressing!"

"Poor woman! It is quite shocking!"

"I don't wonder at her being so terrified."

"I am sure if it was my child I should die on the spot."

Such and such-like were the only sounds which broke in upon the expression of her mental anguish, till at length, while the unhappy lady paused for a moment to blow her nose, the gentle voice of Miss Louisa Perkins was heard to say, "Do you think, ma'am, that there is any gentleman gone off with Matilda too?"

"Never mind whether there is or not!" replied the anxious mother. "What can that signify compared to my beautiful Patty? And such a fortune, too, as her poor, dear father told me this very day that she would be sure of. Oh! it is too cruel of her!"

All this, and a great, a very great deal more in the same strain, was uttered by the bereaved lady, sometimes sitting, sometimes standing, and occasionally lying at full length upon a sofa, and ever with the much-enduring Louisa by her side, till at length every individual at all within hearing became fully aware, that Miss Patty O'Donagough had decidedly eloped with a black-whiskered Don, and that Miss Matilda Perkins

had eloped too, but whether with her or with anybody else, there appeared no evidence to show.

Nothing but the consciousness that her interference could do no good, kept Mrs. Hubert at a distance from her really very unhappy aunt during all these lamentations; but quite aware that she could render no assistance, and being in a state of very painful anxiety respecting the unaccountable disappearance of her sister, she remained with Mr. and Mrs. Henderson, who were equally anxious with herself, silently waiting for the return of General Hubert, who had left them for the purpose of once more entering the empty supper-room and once more inquiring of every servant in the hall if Mrs. Stephenson's equipage had been called.

Much too occupied by their own anxiety to remark the absence of their hostess, they were not aware that, for the last half hour, that unfortunate lady had been employed upon the unpleasing task of convincing herself, by various inquiries among her domestics, that her precious daughter had most certainly left the house without giving a hint to any one of her intention of doing so. And as the black-whiskered Don (too well-remembered as the first-floor lodger in ——— street) had also suddenly become invisible, it was but natural to suppose that he was her companion.

Great, indeed, was the joy of Agnes and her friend Mary, when their two sisters appeared after their mysterious retreat, and greater still was that of Mr. Stephenson, who returned in a few minutes afterwards pale, vehemently agitated, and bringing the terrible intelligence that no tidings could be heard of them. It was then that Mrs. Hubert, her spirits being relieved from her own great anxiety, felt desirous of uttering some word of kindness to her aunt, but this now seemed to be rendered impossible by the earnest conversation in which she was engaged with Mr. Foxcroft.

"No, no, Agnes!" said Mrs. Stephenson, as she heard her sister proposing to the general that they should, before they left the house, express some feeling of sympathy with poor Mrs. O'Donagough's alarm about her daughter, "No, Agnes, you must not speak to her now! It is not on account of her daughter's running away that she is looking as horror-struck and terrified as you see her at this moment. Poor soul! she has heard worse news than that! But where are Lady Stephenson and the Nivetts, and where is your dear girl?"

"All gone home long ago, Nora," replied Mrs. Hubert.

"Then for pity's sake let us go too! This is no place for us to remain in! How kind you are to question me only with your eyes! But tired as I am, I am willing to tell you all our adventures before I sleep, if my poor frightened Frederic feels strength enough left in him to drive to your house for an hour, before he retreats to his own.

The whole party were, in truth, much too anxious to hear all the mysteries of this strange evening explained to leave them any memory of their fatigue, and they all drove together to Berkeley-square though five strokes from the general's repeater warned them that it was high time to go to rest. "But who," said Mrs. Henderson, "could rest till this most incomprehensible adventure is explained?"

## CHAPTER XXXV.

THE breakfast in Berkeley-square was not an early one, but there were other causes for this besides the lateness of the hour at which the general and his lady had retired to rest, for General Hubert, under all circumstances, was sure to be in his bath-room by eight o'clock. Neither was it the protracted slumbers of his lady which retarded the morning meal; for though on this occasion he certainly left her fast asleep,

Her waking eyes had seen the light

long before the clock struck nine. But it sometimes happens that bedrooms and dressing-rooms are used for other purposes than sleeping and dressing.

The first object which greeted the eyes of Mrs. Hubert as she opened them, in consequence of her ears being invaded by a gentle sound near her pillow, was her daughter Elizabeth in her *robe de chambre*, with her beautiful hair all collected in one nymph-like roll at the back of her small but finely-proportioned head, and her fair face glowing with an expression of happiness too vivid to suffer drowsy sleep to exist before it.

"Will you forgive me, mamma? You have been waked by a kiss. It is I who opened your shutters and drew your curtains."

"Is it late, dearest?" said Mrs. Hubert, rousing herself with the alertness of an alarmed conscience, fearful of having kept a hungry party waiting for breakfast. "Make the tea, Elizabeth. Do not mind me—I shall be down very soon."

"But I don't want you to be down very soon, mamma," replied Elizabeth, laughing and blushing beautifully at the same time. "I want to speak to you first. Let me be your lady's maid to-day, may I?"

"Willingly, dear love!" said her mother, accepting an offered kiss, and, shrewdly suspecting the subject of the offered conference, she wrapped a dressing-gown round her, slipped her feet into her quilted satin slippers, and seating herself on the sofa at the bottom of the bed, said, "Now, darling, sit down close beside me, and tell me all you have got to say."

"Not unless you will dress yourself, mamma." And going to the proper receptacles of stockings and shoes, she found all

that was needful and held them with pretty obsequiousness to her mother's hand.

Mrs. Hubert looked up into the face of her daughter as she took them; but the fair conscious girl turned away from the speaking glance, with that true feminine shyness which

Would be wooed, and not unsought be won,

even to speak the words she had come expressly to utter.

There would have been something pretty to watch in the struggle between this shyness, and the wish to disclose the secret that was bursting from her lips, but on such an occasion a mother's heart has no leisure for such speculations, and sympathising with Elizabeth, though she could not quite be said to pity her, she threw her arm round her, and pressing her to her bosom, exclaimed—

"Seymour loves you, Elizabeth! and last night he told you so. Is it not this you would disclose to me?"

The only answer for a minute or two was a fond clinging return of the embrace, and a shower of happy tears shed on the maternal bosom.

"You guessed it, then?" she said at length. "Ah, mamma! how cruelly we wronged him!"

"I thank heaven for it, Elizabeth," replied her mother, "and he may well forgive a wrong which had its origin in such feelings as ours towards him."

"Oh yes, mamma! he is quite aware of that. I do not believe he is at all inclined to complain of that or of anything else. Papa will be so kind as to see him this afternoon, will he not?"

"And why not this morning, Elizabeth?"

"I don't know, mamma. Henry said the afternoon."

"I suppose he must have some business, then, for of course he must be very anxious to see your father."

"He *is* very anxious, my dear mother, and very anxious to see you too," replied Elizabeth, in a pleading tone. "Indeed, indeed, you must never suspect him again of feeling anything that he ought not to feel."

From this point the conversation proceeded with about equal pleasure to both parties, and it was not till a multitude of pleasant things had been said and listened to, that Mrs. Hubert stopped the course of them by exclaiming, "I am very glad, Elizabeth, that this explanation took place between you last night! I should have felt more perfectly ashamed of our suspicions, I think, than I do now, if the first removal of them from your mind had been produced by an event of which you are still both ignorant, instead of by the much more agreeable mode of his confessing his affection for you."

"What event, mamma?" demanded Elizabeth.

"Our unfortunate cousin Patty eloped last night from her father's house," replied Mrs. Hubert.

"Oh, mother! Have I not reason to be glad that I had courage enough to go to the party last night? You know not—oh! you can never know how I dreaded it! But I thought it was right—I thought it was less weak, less indelicate than remaining at home to weep over departed hopes, which I then thought I must have had no right to form. Had I yielded to this weakness, mother, might it not have been said, that he only proposed to me because he had lost her?"

"I don't know, my dear," replied her mother, laughing; "it is strange how much darkness may be dispelled by one little gleam of light. It now seems to me to have been so perfectly absurd in us all to imagine for a moment that Henry Seymour could be in love with Patty O'Donagough, that the idea no longer appears admissible. But what I might have thought without this gleam of light, I know not."

"I wish, mamma," said Elizabeth, "that you would tell papa what has happened before I see him at breakfast. You are all but dressed now: may I send Claridge to tell him that you wish to see him in your dressing-room?"

"And why not tell him yourself, dearest?"

"Because I do not like to see him again till he knows all."

"Well, then, send Claridge to him."

* * * * *

It was with feelings of happiness as pure and unmixed as those of her young daughter, that Mrs. Hubert communicated to her husband the disclosure which had been made to her; but to her very great disappointment, he shook his head ominously as he listened to her.

"My dearest Hubert! Are you not pleased by this news?" said she, looking anxiously in his face. "I trust in heaven that you know nothing against this young man, for that our Elizabeth's happiness depends upon him is most certain."

"Agnes!" he replied, "I doubt if I have feelings of much stronger partiality towards my own sons, than I have felt towards Sir Henry Seymour. I have liked and loved the boy from childhood upwards; and though from a feeling of respect for Sir Edward I never uttered the opinion, I blamed much less than I sympathised with the feelings of the ardent young man when he rebelled against the authority which insisted upon his submitting to a routine of education for which he was not fitted. Therefore I freely allow that all the ill-behaviour of which we heard so much before he re-appeared from his self-banishment, has left no painful impression on my mind whatever. No, Agnes, it is what has happened since that has displeased me. As to the idea that Henry Seymour intended to marry our red-cheeked young cousin, I never entertained it for a moment, but that he has paid her a very unwarrantable degree of attention I do believe; and this, whether it proceeded from fun or fondness, is

equally at variance with the character I should desire to find in the husband of Elizabeth."

"I should agree with you perfectly, Hubert, did I believe it. But what better authority have we for this unwarrantable degree of attention, than for Lord Mucklebury's history of the intended marriage? If you reject the one, I cannot understand how you can receive the other."

"Because in the one case I have no proof, nor ever had any, beyond vague report, while in the other I have the evidence of Sir Edward."

"On what occasion, Hubert?"

"The occasion to which I particularly allude occurred but yesterday. You know he was detained at St. James's till long after you left it, and in coming away he saw Sir Henry Seymour and Miss O'Donagough arm in arm and *tête-à-tête* at the bottom of the staircase, as no lady and gentleman could possibly be seen without drawing upon themselves a degree of observation that Sir Henry Seymour ought to have been desirous to avoid."

"Believe me, Montagu, I can explain all that to you;" and Mrs. Hubert described with the most graphic truth Sir Henry's enforced surrender of herself and daughter in consequence of the manœuvreing of Mrs. O'Donagough. "I confess," she added, "that at the time I *was* very angry with him, because it seemed to me that no man could feel himself obliged to yield such very civil acquiescence to any arrangement that did not accord with his inclination. But surely the declaration of last night is sufficient to convince us that it was no partiality of any kind for Miss O'Donagough which induced him to yield to my unfortunate aunt's attack upon him."

"After all that has passed between us on the subject, my dearest Agnes, you will not think me too completely a convert to the opinions of Aunt Betsy, if I confess to you that what I most object to in the business is Sir Henry Seymour's having any acquaintance at all with the O'Donagoughs, or Allens, or whatever their real names may be. The case was far different with us, dear love, when Mrs. Compton blamed us so severely for our civilities to them at Brighton. In our case the alternative was a rude and almost cruel avoidance of a very near relation; but no such apology can be offered in the case of Seymour. In the highest paroxysm of her displeasure, Aunt Betsy never suspected either of us of seeking their society from preference. We, however, can by no possibility assign any other cause for the familiar intercourse which has unquestionably existed between them and Sir Henry. I have never encountered this wretch O'Donagough Allen anywhere without his alluding to Seymour's having recently dined with him. More than once I have questioned the young man, with as great an air of indifference as I could assume, to ascertain whether the statement were true or not; and though he certainly stammered, and

coloured, and looked very heartily ashamed (which in my judgment by no means made the matter better), he never denied that it was true. I do not like this, Agnes. It shows a species of coarseness, or at best of indifference in the selection of acquaintance, which your Elizabeth, dearest, is as little likely to relish as her sweet mother."

Mrs. Hubert sighed deeply. There was too much apparent truth in these painful observations for her to attempt to reason them away, yet she felt that if they were to be the means of separating Sir Henry and Elizabeth, they would bring a degree of certain misery greatly disproportioned to their importance. As usual, her husband seemed to read her thoughts, for he added immediately, "Do not, however, fancy, my dear love, that I have any desire to separate these young hearts. It would be making poor Henry pay a heavier penalty for his folly than it deserves, but I think you will agree with me in advocating a longer period of probation and delay than would have been necessary had there been no such symptoms of levity. The adventures of last night, of all which he is probably still ignorant, will assist pretty effectually in opening his eyes to the character of his strangely chosen friends. Let not our dear girl have her feelings wounded by a single word of all this."

The breakfast, at which the young Emily and her good governess were present, passed off as such agitating meetings should always be permitted to do. A look, a smile, a silent kiss, said all that it was necessary to say, and when it was ended Elizabeth retired to her own room, astonished at her own composure, and capable of enjoying without any drawback whatever, the dear delight of meditating for the first time with the privileged freedom of sanctioned love upon the unspeakable happiness that awaited her.

When General Hubert and his wife were again left alone, Elizabeth and Sir Henry were for a moment forgotten, while they discussed together the terrible discoveries of the previous night. The testimony of Mrs. Stephenson and Miss Peters was too clear to leave the slightest doubt respecting the character of the man with whom "the widow Barnaby" had connected herself, nor had they either of them any doubt that he was in truth the identical Major Allen who had

—— caused them both so great annoy,

nineteen long years ago at Clifton. It wanted no warning voice from aunt Betsy to awaken the general to the necessity of separating himself and his family now and for ever, from all intercourse with so infamous a personage. But he half frightened the gentle Agnes, by telling her that he was expecting Frederic Stephenson to call upon him for the express purpose of paying a visit in Curzon-street.

"We mean to tell him," said the general, "that we recom

mend his immediately taking measures to leave the country, in order to avoid the dangers of a legal process which would be very likely to terminate in his being obliged to do so in a much less agreeable way."

"Would it not be better, Hubert, to leave him to his own devices?" said his wife.

"No, Agnes; not in this country at least. He cannot be permitted to remain here after the double discovery of last night. Frederic is extremely anxious that he should be off immediately, for as long as he remains in the country, he will be living in dread of his wife's being called into a court of justice, to give evidence of the fraud of which she was a witness. Miss Peters too will live under the same terror, and indeed, Agnes, I think it desirable, for all our sakes, that he should leave England as early and as quietly as possible."

"You cannot doubt my being of the same opinion, Montagu," replied Mrs. Hubert. "I only dreaded for you the extremely disagreeable operation of telling him so."

"Fear not for that, Agnes. The visit will be a very short one, depend upon it. Besides the real motive, we have the ostensible one, you know, of inquiring if they have received any news of Miss O'Donagough."

Mr. Stephenson was punctual to his appointment, and the two gentlemen set out together for Curzon-street. To the question, "Is Mr. O'Donagough at home?" the answer given was, "No, sir," short and decided.

"Is Mrs. O'Donagough at home?"

"I don't know, sir," was the hesitating reply.

"Be so good as to tell her that a gentleman wishes to see her on very particular business."

"Please to walk in, sir," said the small and incautious page, opening the dining-room door for them, and then galloping up the stairs.

"We had better follow him, Frederic, or the affair will be endless," suggested the general.

"I agree with you," answered his companion; and before the little page had half delivered his message, General Hubert and Mr. Stephenson were in the room.

The business which had brought them there was more likely to arrive at a speedy conclusion than they had hoped for, when they entered it, for greatly to their surprise they found assembled in the second drawing-room, a group consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Allen O'Donagough, their daughter, the yellow gentleman with black mustache and whiskers, and the two faithful Perkinses besides.

"I will not apologise for disturbing you, Major Allen," said General Hubert, advancing, "though I did not expect to find you here when I entered. The business which brings us here is yours, and not our own, and cannot, as I think you will allow,

be considered as an intrusion. But it may perhaps be more agreeable to you to converse with us in another room?"

Major Allen measured his two visitors with his eye, and then threw a glance towards the Don; but whatever his first thoughts might have been, his second, which are proverbially the best, induced him to rise from his chair and with a very dignified demeanour to marshal General Hubert and Mr. Stephenson into the next room, the eventful scene of the last night's misadventures. Nay, he even moved his hand in token that they might be seated; but this hospitable notification did not appear to be noticed, for neither gentleman accepted it.

"My business with you, sir," said the general, "need not detain us long. A very disagreeable accident made a lady, for whom both this gentleman and myself are nearly interested, the witness to a most nefarious transaction in which you were the principal agent. It has also come to our knowledge that you are the same person who many years since at Clifton was implicated under the appellation of Major Allen in a transaction which, if I mistake not, caused you to be sent out of the country. Perhaps, sir, as a citizen, I should be doing my duty better by mentioning these facts to a police magistrate; but I wish, from motives purely selfish, I confess, that you should now leave England by your own act, instead of that of the legislature. But this, if done at all, must be done promptly. A very short time will probably render it too late. Are you ready, sir, to give me an assurance that you will depart immediately? If not, or if hereafter I should find such assurance falsified, I shall feel myself obliged, however reluctantly, to obtain the same object by a process that will not depend upon yourself."

Major Allen was, as usual, exceedingly well dressed, and his wig, greatly relaxed in its wavy outline since he made his first re-appearance at Brighton, was a perfect model for the head of a middle aged man of fashion. Though his visitors stood, he had seated himself in a deep arm-chair, and assumed the attitude rather of one who was passing judgment, than receiving it. During the greater part of General Hubert's address to him, his countenance might have been studied in vain for any expression indicative of what was passing within, but at its conclusion a mocking smile took possession of his features, and looking at each gentleman steadily in the face for a minute or two, he said—

"I am really too happy in finding that my nearest connections and myself agree so entirely respecting the little experiment in steam navigation for which I am preparing. Pray, sir (to General Hubert), remember me very affectionately to my charming niece Agnes, and believe me to be your very obedient humble servant, John William Patrick Allen O'Donagough." A strong emphasis was laid upon the last word, for the purpose, probably, of making his auditors understand that he was aware

of and appreciated the privilege by which every man has a right to designate himself by any appellation he may choose to select.

Having uttered this speech, he permitted himself the audacious gratification of another steady stare at them both; and then, rising with an air of great *hauteur* and deliberation, stalked through his favourite side door, and closed it after him.

Convinced that the business upon which they came was satisfactorily executed, the two gentlemen were too well pleased by knowing that it was over to feel any inclination to quarrel with the manner of their reception. After a moment's consultation, they agreed that it would be better to visit the unfortunate Mrs. Allen O'Donagough, for whom they felt much compassion, a civil "good morning," and therefore prepared to make their retreat by passing through the room by which they had entered.

No symptom, however, of any feelings which called for compassion seemed to exist amidst the party they once more came upon. Mrs. Allen O'Donagough was lying at full length upon a sofa, squeezed in at the foot of which perched Miss Louisa Perkins. In full view of the well-pleased maternal eye, upon another sofa, sat the yellow gentleman, and Patty extremely close beside him, her arm lovingly thrown round his neck; while the fair Matilda, with eyes full of very melancholy tenderness, and her tall figure sustaining itself against the mantel-piece, stood watching them.

General Hubert was about to utter something like a friendly farewell, but Mrs. Allen O'Donagough gave him no time for it.

"You are making us an early wedding visit, I must say, gentlemen—but it is all very right and proper between near relations. Give me leave to introduce to you my married daughter, Madame Espartero Christinino Salvator Mundi Tornorino." These names she read from a paper ingeniously attached by a couple of pins to a cushion of the sofa that was exactly within reach of her eye. "You see, general, I have had the good fortune to marry my daughter before you have married yours—and to a man of extremely high rank too. Permit me to present to you ——I beg pardon, permit me to present *you* to Don Espartero Christinino Salvator Mundi Tornorino, my son-in-law. Neither you nor Frederic Stephenson have any title, you know, and therefore it is, of course, proper that you should be presented to him, and not he to you. I am sure I heartily hope that my great niece Elizabeth may do as well.

"But, by-the-by, general, I think it is but fair to give you a hint about that young scamp, Henry Seymour. It's no thanks to him if my daughter *is* married to a man of title and quality—it would have been all the same if his false-heartedness had driven her to marry a mere nobody, which, with my high spirit

and exalted feelings, would certainly have broke my heart. But it is not only his abominable falsehood in love-making that I think it right to mention—I wish also to let you know that there is a secret which he has taken the greatest of all possible care should never come to any of your ears. You none of you guess, I believe, that the young scapegrace was off to Australia when his penitent fool of a guardian thought he had shut himself up somewhere, all in the dumps, because of their quarrel? When we were good friends, together, he told us all about it, and if he had behaved as he ought to have done, I would never have said a word to anybody on the subject—but he *has* provoked me, I won't deny it."

"How did you find out he had been to Australia, Mrs. O'Donagough?" demanded the general. "Did you get acquainted with him there?"

"No, not I, general—but I know it just as well as if I had, for we all came to England in the same ship."

"And it was then that you became acquainted with him?"

"Yes, to be sure it was."

"Now, then, madam," said the well-contented General Hubert, "we will wish you good morning," and with a slight bow to the whole party, the two gentlemen turned to leave the room.

"I say!" cried Madame Espartero Christinino Salvator Mundi Tornorino, calling after them, "don't you forget to tell my cousin Elizabeth what a famous lark I have had. She must be sure to come and pay me a wedding visit."

* * * * *

On returning to Berkeley-square, General Hubert found his wife and daughter very anxiously gazing upon the outside of a large packet which had been just left at the door by the servant of Sir Henry Seymour. Rightly guessing that it contained a confession of the exploit of which he had just learnt the particulars from Mrs. O'Donagough, he fearlessly opened it in their presence. It contained more than one sheet of closely-written paper, and detailed at length, and with very amiable penitence, the history of his escapade, the rebellious feelings which had led to it, the very unpleasant acquaintance that it had entailed upon him, and lastly, with all the eloquence of deep feeling, it explained how his ardent love for the general's lovely daughter had rendered galling the idea of appearing more wild and ill-conducted in the eyes of her family than he had yet done, and induced him to endure the martyrdom of propitiating the good will of Mr. O'Donagough in order to secure his secresy.

"Then Sir Henry, it seems, has not taken more pleasure in the acquaintance than ourselves, General Hubert," said Agnes, with a very happy smile.

"Thank heaven that I know it!" he replied, joyously. "And now, my sweet Elizabeth," he added, fondly embracing

blushing daughter, "I can tell you with a safe conscience that I know not another to whom I could resign the charge of making you happy, with so firm a conviction that the precious trust would be executed faithfully."

Who needs be told that the young Elizabeth's bridal was a gay one? When it was known as a certainty that the Allen O'Donagough family, together with their illustrious son-in-law, were actually departed for the United States, Mrs. Hubert ventured to write a full, true, and particular account of all their recent adventures to her aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Compton; announcing at the same time that her company was earnestly entreated at the approaching wedding, and assuring her that she should meet there no nieces but such as she had too long honoured with her love, for them to feel any doubts as to her pleasure at a reunion.

The delight of the still active old lady on receiving this letter was great indeed. She could not have died happy, and she knew it, so long as "the Barnaby" was an inhabitant of the same land as the Huberts. A dread of mischief and disgrace arising from the incongruous connection perpetually haunted her, and in so serious a shape as very materially to disturb her tranquillity. But she now felt that the danger was over for ever, and immediately wrote an acceptance of the joyous invitation, in a tone of heartfelt happiness that caused tears of pleasure to dim for a moment the beautiful eyes of the bride elect.

Of all the guests assembled at those splendid nuptials, there was not one, perhaps, who excited so universal a degree of interest as herself—all sought to do the venerable and animated old lady honour, and no one could receive their honours more gaily, or more gracefully, giving throughout the whole day but one slight indication that she still could be a little mischievous, if she chose it, and that was by whispering in the general's ear, when Emily was assisting in distributing the wedding-cake after breakfast, "Do you mean to send any wedding-cake across the Atlantic, dear general?"

THE END.

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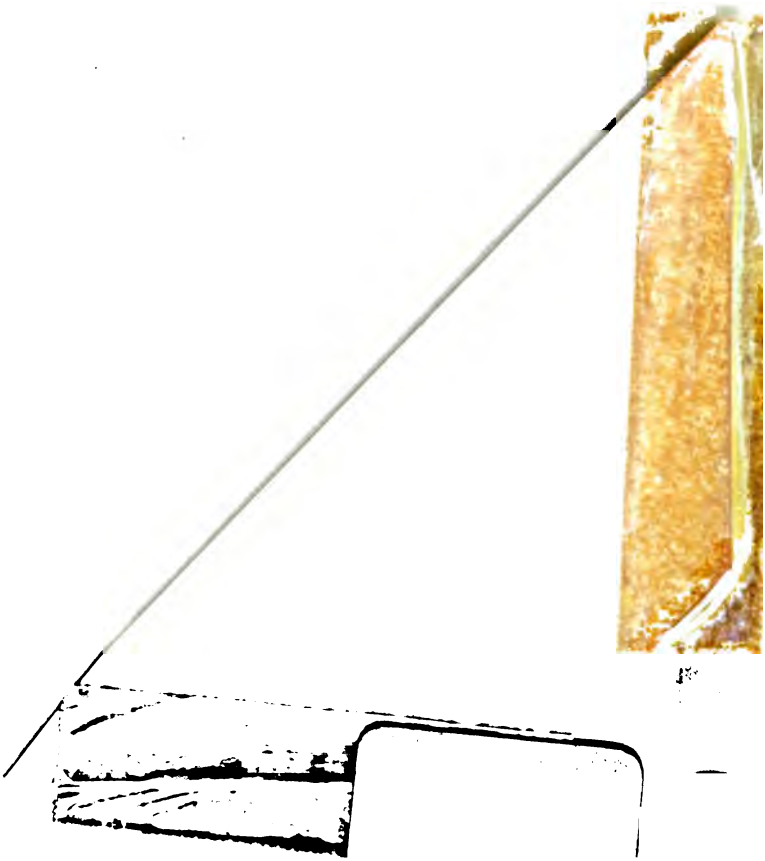
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